

TANCRED

AND

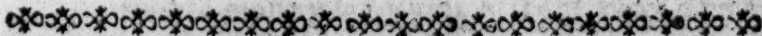
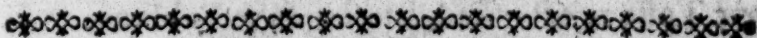
1578/2797.

SIGISMUNDA;

A

TRAGEDY.

By JAMES THOMPSON.



P R E S T O N :

Printed and Sold by W. SERGENT.

P R O L O G U E.

BOLD is the Man ! who, in this nicer Age,
Presumes to tread the chaste corrected Stage.
Now, with gay tinsel Arts we can no more
Conceal the Want of Nature's sterling Ore.
Our Spells are vanish'd, broke our magic Wand,
That us'd to waft you over Sea and Land.
Before your light the fairy People fade,
The Demons fly——The Ghost itself is laid.
In vain of martial Scenes the loud Alarms,
The mighty Prompter thundering out to Arms,
The Playhouse Posse clattering from afar,
The close-wedg'd Battle, and the Din of War.
Now, even the Senate seldom we convene ;
The yawning Fathers nod behind the Scene.
Your Taste rejects the glittering false Sublime,
To sigh in Metaphor, and die in Rhime.
High rant is tumbled from his Gallery Throne :
Description, Dreams—nay Similies are gone.

What shall we then ? to please you how devise ?
Whose Judgment sits not in your Ears and Eyes.
Thrice happy ! could we catch great Shakespear's
Art,

To trace the deep Recesses of the Heart ;
His simple plain Sublime, to which is given
To strike the Soul with darted Flame from Heaven :
Could we awake soft Otway's tender Woe,
The Pomp of Verse and golden Lines of Rowe.

We to your Hearts apply : let them attend ;
Before their silent candid Bar we bend.
If warm'd they listen, 'tis our noblest Praise ;
If cold, they wither all the Mute's Bays.



3

Dramatis Personæ.

M E N

TANCRED, Count of Leece.

SIFFREDI, Lord High Chancellor of Sicily.

Earl OSMOND, Lord High Constable.

RODOLPHO, friend to Tancred.

W O M E N.

SIGISMUNDA, Daughter to Siffredi.

LAURA, sister to Rodolpho.

Barons, Officers, Guards, &c.

S C E N E.

The City of *Palermo* in *Sicily*.



ADVERTISEMENT.

THIS Play is considerably shortened in the Performance; but I hope it will not be disagreeable to the Reader to see it as it was at first written; there being a great Difference betwixt a Play in the Closet, and upon the Stage.



TANCRED and SIGISMUNDA ;

A

T R A G E D Y.



ACT I. SCENE I.

Sigismunda, Laura.

SIGISMUNDA.

AH fatal day to Sicily ! The king
Approaches his last moments ?

Laura. So 'tis fear'd.

Sigif. The death of those distinguish'd by their
station,

But by their virtue more, awakes the mind
To solemn dread, and strikes a saddening awe :
Not that we grieve for them, but for ourselves,
Left to the toil of life——And yet the best

Are,

Are, by the playful children of this world,
At once forgot, as they had never been.
Laura, 'tis said, the heart is sometimes charg'd
With a prophetick sadness : such, methinks,
Now hangson mine. The king's approaching death
Suggests a thousand fears. What troubles thence
May throw the state once more into confusion,
What sudden changes in my father's house
May rise, and part me from my dearest Tancred,
Alarms my thought.

Laura. The fears of love-sick fancy !
Preversely busy to torment it self.
But be assur'd, your father's steady friendship,
Join'd to a certain genius, that commands,
Not kneels to fortune will support and cherish,
Here in the publick eye of Sicily,
This—I may call him—his adopted son,
The noble Tancred, form'd to all his virtues.

Sigis. Ah form'd to charm his daughter !—This
fair morn
Has tempted far the chase. Is he not yet
Return'd ?

Laura. No.—When your father to the king,
Who now expiring lies, was call'd in haste,
He sent each way his messengers to find him ;
With such a look of order and impatience.
As if this near event was to Count Tancred
Of more importance than I comprehend.

Sigis. There lies, my Laura, o'er my Tancred's
birth
A cloud I cannot pierce. With princely accost,
Nay, with respect, which oft I have observ'd,
Stealing at times submissive o'er his features,
In Belmont's woods my father rear'd this youth—

Ah woods ! where first my artless bosom learnt
 The sighs of love,—He gives him out the son
 Of an old friend, a baron of Apulia,
 Who in the late crusado bravely fell.
 But then 'tis strange ; is all his family
 As well as father dead ? and all their friends,
 Except my fire, the generous good Siffredi ?
 Had he a mother, sister, brother left,
 The last remain of kindred, with what pride,
 What rapture, might they fly o'er earth and sea,
 To claim this rising honour of their blood !
 This bright unknown ! this all-accomplish'd youth !
 Who charms—too much—the heart of Sigismunda !

Laura. Perhaps your brother knows him better,
 The friend and partner of his freest hours.
 What says Rodolpho ? does he truly credit
 This story of his birth ?

Laura. He has sometimes,
 Like you, his doubts ; yet when maturely weigh'd,
 Believes it true. As for Lord Tancred's self,
 He never entertain'd the slightest thought
 That verg'd to doubt ; but oft laments his state,
 By cruel fortune so ill-pair'd to yours.

Sigisf. Merit like his, the fortune of the mind.
 Beggars all wealth—then to your brother,
Laura, He talks of me ?

Laura. Of nothing else. Howe'er
 The talk began, it ends with Sigismunda.
 Their morning, noon-tide, and their evening
 walks

Are full of you ; and all the woods of Belmont
 Inamour'd with your name—

Sigisf. Away, my friend ;
 You flatter—yet the dear delusion charms.

Laura.

Tancred and Sigismunda.

Laura. No, Sigismunda, 'tis the strictest truth,
Nor half the truth, I tell you. Even with fondness
My brother talks for ever of the passion,
That fires young Tancred's breast. So much it
strikes him,

He praises love as if he were a lover.

He blames the false pursuits of vagrant youth,
Calls them gay folly, a mistaken struggle
Against best-judging nature. heaven, he says,
In lavish bounty form'd the heart for love ;
In love included all the finer seeds
Of honour, virtue, friendship, purest bliss——

Sigif. Virtuous Rodolpho !

Laura. Then his pleasing theme
He varies to the praises of your lover——

Sigif. And what, my Laura, says he on the subject ?

Laura. He says that, tho' he were not nobly born
Nature has form'd him noble, generous, brave,
Truly magnanimous, and warmly scorning
Whatever bears the smallest taint of baseness :
That every easy virtue is his own ;
Not learnt by painful labour, but inspir'd,
Implanted in his soul—Chiefly one charm
He in his graceful character observes :
That tho' his passions burn with high impatience,
And sometimes, from a noble heat of nature,
Are ready to fly off, yet the least check
Of ruling reason brings them back to temper,
And gentle softness.

Sigif. True ! O true, Rodolpho !
Blest be thy kindred worth for loving his !
He is all warmth, all amiable fire,
All quick heroic ardor ! temper'd soft

With

8 *Tancred and Sigismunda.*

With gentleness of heart, and manly reason !
 If virtue were to wear a human form,
 To light it with her dignity and flame,
 Then softning mix her smiles and tender grace,
 O she would chuse the person of my Tancred ?
 Go on, my Friend, go on, and ever praise him ;
 The subject knows no bounds, nor can I tire,
 While my breast trembles to that sweetest musick !
 The heart of women tastes no truer joy,
 Is never flatter'd with such dear enchantment——
 'Tis more than selfish vanity——as when
 She hears the praises of the man she loves——
Laura. Madam, your father comes.

S C E N E II.

Siffredi, Sigismunda, Laura.

SIFFREDI.

[To an Attendant as he enters.
 Lord Tancred then

Is found ?

Attend. My lord, he quickly will be here.
 I scarce could keep before him, tho' he bid me
 Speed on, to say he would attend your orders.

Sif. 'Tis well—retire—You, too, my daughter,
 leave me.

Sigif. I go, my father—But how fares the king ?

Sif. He is no more. Gone to that awful state,
 Where kings the crown wear only of their virtues.

Sigif. How bright must then be his !——This
 stroke is sudden.

He was this morning well, when to the chase
 Lord Tancred went.

Sif. 'Tis true. But at his years
 Death gives short notice——Drooping nature then,
 Without

Without a gust of pain to shake it, falls.
His death, my daughter, was that happy period
Which few attain, the duties of his day
Were all discharg'd, and gratefully enjoy'd
It's noblest blessings; calm, as evening skies,
Was his pure mind, and lighted up with hopes
That open heaven; when, for his last long sleep
Timely prepar'd, a lassitude of life,
A pleasing weariness of mortal joy,
Fell on his soul, and down he sunk to rest.
O may my death be such!—He but one wish
Left unfulfill'd, which was to see Count Tancred—

Sigis. To see Count Tancred!—Pardon me, my
Lord——

Sif. For what my daughter?—But, with such
emotion,

Why did you start at mention of Count Tancred?

Sigis. Nothing—I only hop'd the dying king
Might mean to make some generous just Provision
For this your worthy charge, this noble orphan.

Sif. And he has done it largely—Leave me now
I want some private conference with Lord Tancred.

S C E N E III.

Siffredi alone.

My doubts are but too true—If these old eyes
Can trace the marks of love, a mutual passion
Has seiz'd, I fear, my daughter and this prince,
My sovereign now—Should it be so? ah there,
There lurks a brooding tempest that may shake
My long-concerted scheme, to settle firm
The publick peace and welfare, which the king
Has made the prudent basis of his will——
Away! unworthy views! you shall not tempt me!
Nor

Nor interest nor ambition shall seduce
 My fixt resolve——perish the selfish thought,
 Which our own good prefers to that of millions!--
 He comes---my king---unconscious of his fortune.

S C E N E IV.

Tancred. Siffredi.

Tan. My Lord Siffredi, in your looks I read,
 Confirm'd, the mournful news that fly abroad
 From tongue to tongue---We then, at last have lost
 The good old King?

Siff. Yes, we have lost a father!
 The greatest blessing heaven bestows on mortals,
 And seldom found amidst these wilds of time.
 A good, a worthy king!—Here me, my Tan-
 cred,

And I will tell thee, in a few plain words,
 How he deserv'd that best that glorious title.
 'Tis nought complex, 'tis clear as truth and virtue.
 He lov'd his people, deem'd them all his Children;
 The good exalted and depress'd the bad.
 He spurn'd the flattering crew, with scorn rejected
 Their smooth advice that only means themselves,
 Their schemes to aggrandize him into baseness:
 Nor did he less disdain the secret breath,
 The whisper'd tale, that blights a virtuous name.
 He sought alone the good of those for whom
 He was entrusted with the sovereign power:
 Well knowing that a people in their rights
 And industry protected; living safe
 Beneath the sacred shelter of the laws,
 Encourag'd in their genius, arts, and labours,
 And happy each as he himself deserves,
 Are ne'er ungrateful. With unsparing hand

They

They will for him provide : their filial love
And confidence are his unfailing treasure,
And every honest man his faithful guard.

Tan. A general face of grief o'er spreads the city.
I mark'd the people, as I hither came,
In Crouds assembled, struck with silent sorrow,
And pouring forth the noblest praise of tears.
Those whom Remembrance of their former woes,
And long experience of the vain illusions
Of youthful hope, and into wise consent
And fear of change corrected, wrung their hands,
And often casting up their eyes to heaven
Gave sign of sad conjecture. Others shew'd,
Athwart their grief, or real or affected,
A gleam of expectation, from what chance
And change might bring. A mingled murmur run
Along the streets ; and, from the lonely court
Of him who can no more assist their fortunes,
I saw the courtier-fry, with eager haste,
All hurrying to Constantia.

Siff. Noble youth !

I joy to hear from thee these just reflexions,
Worthy of riper years—But if they seek
Constantia, trust me, they mistake their course.

Tau. How ! Is she not, my lord, the late king's
sister,

Heir to the crown of Sicily ? the last
Of our fam'd Norman line, and now our queen ?

Siff. Tancred, 'tis true ; she is the late king's
sister,

The sole surviving offspring of that tyrant
William the bad—so for his vices stil'd :
Who spilt much noble blood, and sore oppress'd
Th' exhausted land : whence grievous wars arose,
And

And many a dier convulsion shook the state.
 When he, whose death Sicilia mourns to-day,
 William, who has and well deserv'd the name
 Of Good, succeeding to his father's throne,
 Reliev'd his country's woes—But to return—
 She is the late king's sister, born some months
 After the tyrant's death, but not next heir.

Tan. You much surprize me—May I then presume

To ask who is ?

Siff. Come near, noble Tancred,
 Son of my eare ! I must, on this occasion,
 Consult thy generous heart ; which, when conducted
 Gives better counsel than the hoary head—
 Then know, there lives a prince, here in Palermo
 The lineal offspring of our famous heroe,
 Roger the first.

Tan. Great heaven !—How far remov'd
 From that our mighty founder ?

Siff. His great grandson :
 Sprung from his eldest son, who died untimely,
 Before his father.

Tan. Ha ! the prince you mean
 Is he not Manfred's son ? The generous, brave,
 Unhappy Manfred ! whom the tyrant William,
 You just now mention'd, not content to spoil
 Of his paternal crown, threw into fetters,
 And infamously murder'd.

Siff. Yes—the same.

Tan. By heavens ! I joy to find our Norman reign,
 The light of earth amidst these barbarous ages !
 Yet rears it's head ; and shall not, from the lance,
 Pats to the feeble distaff—But this prince
 Where has he lain conceal'd ?

Siff.

Siff. The late good king,
By noble pity mov'd, contriv'd to save him
From his dire father's unrelenting rage;
And had him rear'd in private, as became
His birth and hopes, with high and princely nur-
ture.

Till now too young to rule a troubled state,
By civil broils most miserable torn,
He in his safe retreat has lain conceal'd,
His birth and fortune to himself unknown;
But when the dying king to me entrusted,
As to the chancellor of the realm, his will,
His successor he nam'd him.

Tan. Happy Youth!

He then will triumph o'er his father's foes,
O'er haughty Osmond, and the tyrant's daughter.

Siff. Ay, that is what I dread—that heat of youth;
There lurks, I fear, perdition to the state.
I dread the horrors of rekindled war:
Tho' dead the tyrant still is to be fear'd;
His daughter's party still is strong, and numerous:
Her friend, earl Osmond, constable of Sicily,
Experienc'd, brave, high-born, of mighty interest.
Better the prince and princess should by marriage
Unite their friends, their interest and their claims:
Then will the peace and welfare of the land
On a firm basis rise.

Tan. My lord Siffredi,
If by myself I of this prince may judge,
That scheme will scarce succeed—Your prudent age
In vain will council, if the heart forbid it—
But wherefore fear? the right is clearly his;
And under your direction, with each man
Of worth, and stedfast loyalty, to back

At

At once the king's appointment and his birthright,
 There is no ground for fear. They have great odds,
 Against the astonish'd sons of violence,
 Who fight with awful justice on their side,
 All Sicily will rouse, all faithful hearts
 Will range themselves around prince Manfred's son.
 For me, I here devote me to the service
 Of this young prince; I every drop of blood
 Will lose with joy, with transport, in his cause—
 Pardon my warmth—but that, my lord, will never
 To this decision come—then find the prince;
 Lose not a moment to awaken in him
 The royal soul. Perhaps he now disponding
 Pines in a Corner, and laments his fortune;
 That in the narrow bounds of private life
 He must confine his aims, those swelling virtues
 Which from his noble father he inherits.

Siff. Perhaps regardless, in the common bane
 Of youth he melts, in vanity and love.
 But if the seeds of virtue glow within him,
 I will awake a higher sense, a love
 That grasps the loves and happiness of millions.

Tan. Why that surmise? Or should he love *Siff-*
redi,

I doubt not, it is nobly, which will raise
 And animate his virtues—O permit me
 To plead the cause of youth—their virtue oft,
 In pleasure's soft enchantment lull'd a while,
 Forgets itself; it sleeps and gayly dreams,
 Till great occasion rouse it: then, all flame,
 It walks abroad, with heighten'd soul and vigour,
 And by the change astonishes the world.
 Even with a kind of sympathy, I feel
 The joy that waits this prince; when all the powers,
Th

Th' expanding heart can wish, of doing good ;
 Whatever swells ambition, or exalts
 The human soul into divine emotions,
 All croud at once upon him.

Siff. Ah, my Tancred,
 Nothing so easy as in speculation,
 And at a distance seen, the course of honour,
 A fair delightful champain strew'd with flowers.
 But when the practice comes ; when our fond pas-
 sions,
 Pleasure and pride and self-indulgence throw
 Their magic dust a'ound, the prospect roughens :
 Then dreadful passes, craggy mountains rise,
 Cliffs to be scal'd, and torrents to be stem'd :
 Then toil ensues, and perseverance stern ;
 And endless combats with our grosser sense,
 Oft lost, and oft renew'd ; and generous pain
 For others felt ; and, harder lesson still !
 Our honest bliss for others sacrific'd ;
 And all the rugged task of virtue quails
 The stoutest heart of common resolution,
 Few get above this turbid scene of strife,
 Few gain the summit, breathe that purest air,
 That heavenly ether, which untroubled sees
 The storm of vice and passion rage below.

Tan. Most true, my lord. But why thus augure
 ill ?

You seem to doubt this prince. I know him not.
 Yet oh, methinks, my heart could answer for him !
 The juncture is so high so strong the gale
 That blows from heaven, as thro' the dearest soul
 Might breathe the godlike energy of virtue.

Siff. Here him, immortal shades of his great fa-
 thers !—

Forgive

Forgive me, fir, this trial of your heart :
Thou ! thou art he !

Tan. *Siff.*

Siff. Tancred, thou !

Thou art the man, of all the many thousands
That toil upon the bosom of this isle,
By heaven elected to command the rest,
To rule, protect them, and to make them happy !

Tan. Manfred my father ! I the last support
Of the fam'd Norman line, that awes the world !
I ! who this morning wander'd forth an orphan,
Outcast of all but thee, my second father !
Thus call'd to glory ! to the first great lot
Of human kind !—O wonder-working hand
That, in majestic silence, sways at will
The mighty movements of unbounded nature ;
O grant me heaven ! the virtues to sustain
This awful burden of so many heroes !
Let me not be exalted into shame,
Set up the worthless pageant of vain grandeur.

Mean time I think the justice of the king,
Who has my right bequeath'd me. Thee Siffredi,
I thank thee—O I ne'er enough can thank thee !
Yes, thou hast been—thou art—shalt be my father !
Thou shalt direct my unexperienc'd years,
Shalt be the ruling head, and I the hand.

Siff. It is enough for me—to see my sovereign
Assert his virtues, and maintain his honour.

Tan. I think, my lord, you said the king com-
mitted

To you his will. I hope it is not clogg'd
With any base conditions, any clause,
To tyrannize my heart, and to Constantia
Enslave my hand devoted to another.

The

The hint you just now gave of that alliance,
You must imagine, wakes my fear. But know,
In this alone I will not bear dispute,
Not even from thee, Siffredi!—Let the council
Be strait assembled, and the will there open'd :
Thence issue speedy orders to convene,
This day ere noon, the senate : where those barons,
Who now are in Palermo, will attend,
To pay their ready homage to the king,
Their rightful king, who claims his native crown,
And will not be a king by deeds and parchments.

Siff. I go, my liege. But once again permit me
To tell you—Now, now, is the trying crisis,
That must determine of your future reign.
O with heroic rigour watch your heart !
And to the sovereign duties of the king,
Th' unequal'd pleasures of a god on earth,
Submit the common joys, the common passions,
Nay, even the virtues of the private man.

Tan. Of that no more, they not oppose, but aid,
Invigorate cherish, and reward each other.
The kind all-ruling wisdom is no tyrant.

S C E N E V.

Tancred *alone.*

Now, generous Sigismunda, comes my turn,
To shew my love was not of thine unworthy,
When fortune bade me blush to look to thee.
But what is fortune to the wish of love ?
A miserable bankrupt ! O 'tis poor,
'Tis scanty all, what'er we can bestow !
The wealth of kings is wretchedness and want !—
Quick, let me find her ! taste that highest joy,
Th' exalted heart can know, the mixt effusion
Of gratitude and love !—Behold, she comes !

B

S C E N E

SCENE VI.

Tancred. Sigismunda.

Tanc. My fluttering soul was all on wing to find thee,

My love! my Sigismunda!

Sigif. O my Tancred!

Tell me, what means this mystery and gloom
That low'rs around? just now involv'd in thought
My father shot athwart me—You, my lord,
Seem strangely mov'd—I fear some dark event
From the king's death to trouble our repose,
That tender calm we in the woods of Belmont
So happily-enjoy'd—Explain this hurry,
What means it? say.

Tanc. It means that we are happy!
Beyond our most romantic wishes happy!

Sigif. You but perplex me more.

Tanc. It means, my fairest!
That thou art queen of Sicily; and I
The happiest of mankind! than monarch more!
Because with thee I can adorn my throne.
Manfred, who fell by tyrant William's Rage,
Fam'd Roger's lineal issue, was my father..

[*pausing.*]

You droop, my love; dejected on a sudden;
You seem to mourn my fortune—The soft tear
Springs in thy eye—O let me kiss it off—
Why this, my Sigismunda?

Sigif. Royal Tancred,
None at your glorious fortune can like me
Rejoice;—yet me alone, of all Sicilians,
It makes unhappy.

Tanc. I should hate it then?
Should throw, with scorn, the splendid ruin from
me!—

No,

No, Sigismunda, 'tis my hope with thee
To share it, whence it draws it's richest value.

Sigif. You are my sovereign——I at humble
distance—

Tanc. Thou art my queen ! the sovereign of my
soul !

You never reign'd with such triumphant lustre,
Such winning charms as now ; yet, thou art still
The dear, the tender, generous Sigismunda !
Who, with a heart exalted far above
Those selfish views that charm the common breast,
Stoop'd from the height of life and courted beauty,
Then, then, to love me, when I seem'd of fortune
The hopeless outcast, when I had no friend,
None to protect and own me but thy father.
And would'st thou claim all goodness to thy self?
Canst thou thy Tancred deem so dully form'd,
Of such gross clay, just as I reach the point—
A point my wildest hopes could never image——
In that great moment, full of every virtue,
That I should then so mean a traitor prove
To the best bliss and honour of mankind,
So much disgrace the human heart, as then,
For the dead form of flattery and pomp,
The faithless joys of courts, to quit kind truth,
The cordial sweets of friendship and of love,
The life of life ! my all my, Sigismunda !
I could upbraid thy fears, call them unkind,
Cruel, unjust, an outrage to my heart,
Did they not spring from love.

Sigif. Think not, my lord,
That to such vulgar doubts I can descend.
Your heart, I know, disdains the little thought
Of changing with the vain external change

Of circumstance and fortune. Rather thence
 It would, with rising ardor, greatly feel
 A noble pride to shew itself the same.
 But, ah ! the hearts of kings are not their own.
 There is a haughty duty that subjects them
 To chains of state, to wed the publick welfare,
 And not indulge the tender private virtues.
 Some high-descended princels, who will bring
 New power and interest to your throne demands
 Your royal hand——perhaps Constantia——

Tanc. She !

O name her not ! were I this moment free,
 And disengag'd as he who never felt
 The powerful eye of beauty, never sigh'd
 For matchless worth like thine, I should abhor
 All thoughts of that alliance. Her fell father
 Most basely murder'd mine ; and she, his daughter,
 Supported by his barbarous party still,
 His pride inherits, his imperious spirit,
 And insolent pretensions to my throne.
 And canst thou deem me then so poorly tame,
 So cool a traitor to my father's blood,
 As from the prudent cowardice of state
 E'er to submit to such a base proposal ?
 Detested thought ! O doubly, doubly hateful !
 From the two strongest passions ; from aversion
 To this Constantia—and from love to thee.

Custom, 'tis true, a venerable tyrant,
 O'er servile man extends her blind dominion :
 The pride of kings enslaves them ; their ambition,
 Or interest, lords it o'er the better passions.
 But vain their talk, mask'd under specious words
 Of station. duty, and of public good :
 They whom just heaven has to a throne exalted,

To

To guard the rights and liberties of others,
 What duty binds them to betray their own ?
 For me, my freeborn heart shall bear no dictates,
 But those of truth and honour ; wear no chains,
 But the dear chains of love and Sigismunda !
 Or if indeed my choice must be directed
 By views of publick good whom shall I chuse
 So fit to grace to dignify a crown,
 And beam sweet mercy on a happy people,
 As thee, my love ? whom place upon my throne
 But thee, descended from the good Siffredi ?
 'Tis fit that heart be thine, which drew from him
 Whate'er can make it worthy thy acceptance.
Sigis. Cease, cease, to rise my hopes above my
 duty.

Charm me no more, my Tancred !—O that we
 In those blest woods, where first you won my soul,
 Had pass'd our gentle days ; far from the toil
 And pomp of courts ! such is the wish of love ;
 Of love, that, with delightful weakness, knows
 No blis and no ambition but itself.
 But in the world's full light, those charming dreams,
 Those fond illusions vanish. Awful duties,
 The tyranny of men, even your own heart,
 Where lurks a sense your passions stifles now,
 And proud imperious honour call you from me.
 'Tis all in vain—You cannot hush a voice
 That murmurs here—I must not be persuaded !

Tancred, kneeling.

Here me, thou soul of all my hopes and wishes !
 And witness, heaven ! prime source of love and joy !
 Not a whole warring world combin'd against me ;
 It's pride it's splendor, it's imposing forms,
 Nor interest, nor ambition, nor the face

Nor

Of solemn state, not even thy father's wisdom,
Shall ever shake my faith to Sigismunda !

[Trumpets and acclamations heard.

But, hark ! the publick voice to duties call me,
Which with unwearied zeal I will discharge ;
And thou, yes thou, shalt be my bright reward—
Yet—ere I go—to hush thy lovely fears,
Thy delicate objections—— *writes his name.*

Take this blank,
Sign'd with my name, and give it to thy father :
Tell him 'tis my command, it be fill'd up
With a most strict and solemn marriage-contract.
How dear each tie ! how charming to my soul !
That more unites me to my Sigismunda.

For thee and for my people's good to live,
Is all the bliss which sovereign power can give.



ACT II. SCENE I.

Siffredi alone.

SO far 'tis well—The late king's will proceeds
Upon the plan I counsel'd ; that prince Tancred
Shall make Constantia partner of his throne.

O great, O wish'd event ! whence the dire seeds
Of dark intestines broils, of civil war,
And all its dreadful miseries and crimes,
Shall be for ever rooted from the land.

May these dim eyes, long blasted by the rage
Of cruel faction and my country's woes,

Tir'd with the toils and vanities of life,
Behold this period, then be clos'd in peace !

But how this mighty obstacle surmount,
Which love has thrown betwixt ? love, that disturbs
The

The schemes of wisdom still ; that wing'd with
passion,

Blind and impetuous in its fond pursuits,
Leaves the grey-headed reason far behind.

Alas ! how frail the state of human bliss !

When even our honest passions oft destroy it.

I was to blame, in solitude and shades,

Infectious scenes ! to trust their youthful hearts.

Would I had mark'd the rising flame ! that now

Burns out with dangerous force—My daughter owns

Her passion for the king ; she trembling own'd it,

With prayers and tears and tender supplications,

That almost shook my firmness—And this blank,

Which his rash fondness gave her, shews how much,

To what a wild extravagance he loves—

I see no means—it foils my deepest thought—

How to controul this madness of the king,

That wears the face of virtue, and will thence

Disdain restraint, will from his generous heart

Borrow new rage, even speciously oppose

To reason reason—But it must be done.

My own advice, of which I more and more

Approve, the strict conditions of the will,

Highly demand his marriage with Constantia ;

Or else her party has a fair pretence,——

And all, at once, is horror and confusion—

How issue from this maze?—The crouding barons

Here summon'd to the palace, meet already,

To pay their homage, and confirm the will.

On a few moments hangs the public fate,

On a few hasty moments—Ha ! there shone

A gleam of hope—Yes—with this very pap r

I yet will save him—Necessary means

For good and noble ends can ne'er be wrong.

In

In that resistless, that peculiar case,
 Deceit is truth and virtue—But how hold
 This lion in the toil?—O I will form it
 Of such a fatal thread, twist it so strong
 With all the ties of honour and of duty,
 That his most desperate fury shall not break
 The honest snare—Here is the royal hand—
 I will beneath it write a perfect, full,
 And absolute agreement to the will;
 Which read before the nobles of the realm
 Assembled, in the sacred face of Sicily,
 Constantia present, every heart and eye
 Fix'd on their monarch, every tongue applauding,
 He must submit, his dream of love must vanish—
 It shall be done!—To me, I know, 'tis ruin;
 But safety to the public, to the king.
 I will not reason more, I will not listen
 Even to the voice of honour—No—'tis fix'd!
 I here devote me for my prince and country;
 Let them be safe, and let me nobly perish!
 Behold earl Osmond comes; without whose aid
 My schemes are all in vain.

S C E N E II.

Osmond, Siffredi.

Ofm. My lord Siffredi.

I from the council hasten'd to Constantia,
 And have accomplish'd what we there propos'd.
 The princess to the will submits her claims.
 She with her presence means to grace the senate,
 And of your royal charge young Tancred's hand
 Accept. At first indeed, it shock'd her hopes
 Of reigning sole, this new surprizing scene
 Of Manfred's son, appointed by the king
 With her joint-heir—But I so fully shew'd

The

The justice of the case, the public good
And sure establish'd peace which thence would rise,
Join'd to the strong necessity that urg'd her,
If on Sicilia's throne she meant to sit,
As to the wise disposal of the will
Her high ambition tam'd. Methought, besides,
I could discern that not from prudence merely
She to this choice submitted.

Siff. Noble Osmond,

You have in this done to the public great
And signal service. Yes, I must avow it;
This frank and ready instance of your zeal,
In such a trying crisis of the state,
When interest and ambition might have warp'd
Your views; I own, this truly generous virtue
Upbraids the rashness of my former judgment.

Ofm. Siffredi, no—To you belongs the praise;
The glorious work is yours. Had I not seiz'd,
Improv'd the wish'd occasion to root out
Division from the land, and save my country,
I had been base, been infamous for ever.
'Tis you, my lord, to whom the many thousands,
That by the barbarous sword of civil war
Had fallen inglorious, owe their lives; to you
The sons of this fair isle, from her first peers
Down to the swain who tills her golden plains,
Owe their safe homes, their soft domestic hours,
And thro' late time posterity shall bless you,
You who advis'd this will—I blush to think,
I have so long oppos'd the best good man
In Sicily—With what impartial care
Ought we to watch o'er prejudice and passion,
Nor trust too much the jaundic'd eye of party!
Henceforth its vain delusions I renounce,

Its

Its hot determinations, that confine
 All merit and all virtue to itself.
 To yours I join my hand ; with you will own
 No interest and no party but my country.
 Nor is your friendship only my ambition :
 There is a dearer name the name of father,
 By which I should rejoice to call Siffredi.
 Your daughter's hand would to the public weal
 Unite my private happiness.

Siff. My lord,
 You have my glad consent. To be allied
 To your distinguish'd family, and merit,
 I shall esteem an honour. From my soul
 I here embrace earl Osmond as my friend,
 And son.

Os. You make him happy. This assent,
 So frank and warm, to what I long have wish'd,
 Engages all my gratitude ; at once,
 In the first blossom, it matures our friendship.
 I from this moment vow myself thy friend,
 And zealous servant of Siffredi's house.

Enter an Officer belonging to the Court.

Officer to Siffredi.

The king, my lord demands your speedy presence:

Siff. I will attend him strait—Farewell, my lord.
 The senate meets ; there, a few moments hence.
 I will rejoin you.

Os. There my noble lord,
 We will compleat this salutary work,
 Will there begin a new auspicious era.

S C E N E

Siffredi
 But d

Perha
 Yield
 I am n
 By fig
 Of lov
 To ch
 Nor fu
 To bo
 By nat
 Refign
 Who v
 And m
 Not fi

Os.

Unites
 We m
 Not gl
 But all
 The fo
 No pa
 Prince
 Combi
 This t
 And w
 I truly

S C E N E III.

Osmond alone.

Siffredi gives his daughter to my wishes—

But does she give herself? gay, young, and flatter'd,

Perhaps engag'd, will she her youthful heart

Yield to my harsher, uncomplying years?

I am not form'd; by flattery and praise,

By sighs and tears, and all the winning trade

Of love, to feed a fair one's vanity;

To charm at once and spoil her. These soft arts

Nor suit my years nor temper; these be left

To boys and doating age. A prudent father,

By nature charg'd to guide and rule her choice,

Resigns his daughter to a husband's power,

Who with superior dignity, with reason,

And manly tenderness, will ever love her;

Not first a kneeling slave, and then a tyrant.

S C E N E IV.

Osmond, Barons.

Os. My lords, I greet you well. This wondrous day

Unites us all in amity and friendship.

We meet to-day with open hearts and looks,

Not gloom'd by party, scouling on each other,

But all the children of one happy isle,

The social sons of liberty. No pride,

No passion now, no thwarting views divide us:

Prince Manfred's line, at last, to William's join'd,

Combines us in one family of brothers.

This to the late good king's will,

And wise Siffredi's generous care we owe.

I truly give you joy. First of you all,

I here

28 *Tancred and Sigismunda.*

I here renounce those errors and divisions
That have so long disturb'd our peace, and seem'd,
Fermenting still, to threaten new commotions—
By time instructed let us not disdain
To quit mistakes. We all, my lords, have err'd.
Men may, I find, be honest, tho' they differ.

1st *Bar.* Who follows not, my lord, the fair
example

You set us all, whate'er be his pretence,
Loves not with single and unbia's'd heart
His country as he ought.

2d *Bar.* O beauteous peace !

Sweet union of a state ! what else, but thou,
Gives safety, strength, and glory to a people !
I bow, lord constable, beneath the snow
Of many years; yet in my breast revives
A youthful flame. Methinks, I see again
Those gentle days renew'd, that blest'd our isle,
Ere by this wasteful fury of division,
Worse than our *Ætna's* most destructive fires,
It desolated sunk. I see our plains
Unbounded waving with the gifts of harvest ;
Our seas with commerce throng'd, our busy ports
With chearful toil. Our *Enna* blooms afresh ;
Afresh the sweets of thy my *Hybla* flow.
Our nymphs and shepherds, sporting in each vale,
Inspire new song, and wake the pastoral reed—
The tongue of age is fond—Come, come, my sons ;
I long to see this prince of whom the world,
Speaks largely well—His father was my friend,
The brave unhappy *Manfred*—Come, my lords ;
We tarry here too long.

S C E N E

SCENE V.

Two Officers, *keeping of the croud.*

One of the croud.

Shew us our king,

The valiant Manfred's son, who lov'd the people—
We must, we will behold him—Give us way.

1st *Off.* Pray, gentlemen, give back—it must
not be—

Give back, I pray—on such a glad occasion
I would not ill entreat the lowest of you.

2d *Man of the croud.*

Nay, give us but a glimpse of our young king.
We more than any baron of them all
Will pay him true allegiance.

2d *Off.* Friends—indeed—

You cannot pass this way—We have strict orders,
To keep for him himself, and for the barons,
All these apartments clear—Go to the gate
That fronts the sea—You there will find admission.

All.

Long live king Tancred ! Manfred's son—Huzza !

[*Croud goes off.*]

1st *Off.* I do not marvel at their rage of joy :

He is a brave and amiable prince.

When in my lord Siffredi's house I liv'd,

Ere by his favour I obtain'd this office,

I there remember well the young Count Tancred.

To see him and to love him were the same.

He was so noble in his ways, yet still

So affable and mild—Well, well, old Sicily,

Yet happy days await thee !

2d *Off.* Grant it heaven !

We have seen sad and troublous times enough.

He is, they say, to wed the late king's sister,

Constantia.

1st *Officer.*

1st *Offi.* Friend, of that I greatly doubt,
 Or I mistake, or lord Siffredi's daughter
 The gentle Sigismunda has his heart.
 If one may judge by kindly cordial looks,
 And fond assiduous care to please each other,
 Most certainly they love—O be they blest,
 As they deserve! it were great pity aught
 Should part a matchless pair: the glory he,
 And she the blooming grace of Sicily!

2d *Offi.* My lord Rodolpho comes.

SCENE VI.

Rodolpho, *from the senate.*

Rodol. My honest friends,

You may retire.

Officers go out.

A storm is in the wind.

This Will perplexes all. No, Tancred never
 Can stoop to these conditions, what at once
 Attack his rights, his honour, and his love.
 Those wise old men, those plodding grave state
 pedants,
 Forget the course of youth; their crooked prudence,
 To baseness verging still, forgets to take
 Into their fine-spun schemes the generous heart,
 That thro' the cobweb system bursting lays
 Their labours waste—So will this business prove,
 Or I mistake the king—back from the pomp
 He seem'd at first to shrink: and round his brow
 I mark'd a gathering cloud, when by his side,
 As if design'd to share the public homage,
 He saw the tyrant's daughter. But confess'd,
 At least to me, the doubling tempest frown'd,
 And shook his swelling bosom, when heard
 Th' unjust, the base conditions of the will.

Uncertain,

Uncer
 He oft
 And in
 With
 And h
 As if t
 Oppre
 Passes

Law
 Is fals
 Had f
 By th
 He M
 The f
 Those
 Whic
 Had j
 All fa
 Even
 And
 Abov
 All in
 For k
 On h
 Ro

Ther
 La
 Siffre

Uncertain, tost in cruel agitation,
He oft, methought, address'd himself to speak
And interrupt Siffredi; who appear'd,
With conscious haste, to dread that interruption,
And hurry'd on—But hark! I here a noise,
As if th' assembly rose?—Ha! Sigismunda,
Oppress'd with grief and wrapt in pensive sorrow,
Passes along—

*Sigismunda and attendants pass thro' the
back scene. Laura advances.*

SCENE VII.

Rodolpho, Laura,

Laura. Your high-prais'd friend, the king,
Is false, most vilely false! the meanest slave
Had shown a nobler heart; nor grossly thus,
By the first bait ambition spread, been gull'd.
He Manfred's son! away! it cannot be!
The son of that brave prince could ne'er betray
Those rights so long usurp'd from his great fathers,
Which he, this day, by such amazing fortune,
Had just regain'd; he ne'er could sacrifice
All faith, all honour, gratitude and love,
Even just resentment of his father's fate,
And pride itself; whate'er exalts a man
Above the groveling sons of peasant-mud,
All in a moment—And for what? why, truly
For kind permission, gracious leave, to sit
On his own throne with tyrant William's daughter!

Rodol. I stand amaz'd—You surely wrong him,
Laura.

There must be some mistake.

Laura. There can be none!
Siffredi read his full and free consent,

Before

Before th' applauding senate. True indeed,
 A small remain of shame, a timorous weakness,
 Even dastardly in falshood, made him blush
 To act this scene in Sigismunda's eye,
 Who sunk beneath his perfidy and baseness,
 Hence, till to-morrow he adjourn'd the senate—
 To-morrow fix'd with infamy to crown him !
 Then, leading off his gay triumphant princes,
 He left the poor unhappy Sigismunda,
 To bend her trembling steps to that sad home
 His faithless vows will render hateful to her—
 He comes—Farewel—I cannot bear his presence !

SCENE VIII.

Tancred, Siffredi, Rodolpho.

Tancred, *entering, to Siffredi.*

Avoid me, hoary traitor !—Go, Rodolpho,
 Give orders that all passages this way
 Be shut—Defend me from a hateful world,
 The bane of peace and honour—then return—
 What! dost thou haunt me still? O monstrous insult!
 Unparallel'd indignity ! just heaven !
 Was ever king, was ever man so treated ?
 So trampled into baseness !

Siff. Here, my liege,
 Here strike ! I nor deserve, nor ask for mercy.

Tanc. Distraction !—O my soul !—Hold reason
 hold

Thy giddy feat—O this inhuman outrage
 Unhinges thought !

Siff. Exterminate thy servant !

Tanc. All, all but this I could have borne—but
 this !

This

This da
 This m
 That w

Most e
Siff.

My roy
Tanc.

The lo
 Robb'd

On the
 The fa

Which
 And in

Siff.
 Which

If by
Tanc.

Great

Hast t

My n

Giver

With

Benea

To fl

To a

This

In su

But t

Tou

Shall

But

This daring insolence beyond example !
This murderous stroke that stabs my peace for ever !
That wounds me there—there ! where the human
heart

Most exquisitely feels——

Siff. O bear it not,

My royal lord ! appease on me your vengeance !

Tanc. Did ever tyrant imagine aught so cruel !

The lowest slave that crawls upon the earth.

Robb'd of each comfort heaven bestows on mortals,

On the bare ground, has still his virtue left,

The sacred treasures of an honest heart,

Which thou hast dar'd, with rash audacious hand,

And impious fraud, in me to violate——

Siff Behold, my liege, that rash audacious hand,
Which not repents its crime—O glorious ! happy !
If by my ruin I can save your honour.

Tanc. Such honour I renounce ! with sovereign
scorn

Greatly detest it, and it's mean adviser !

Hast thou not dar'd beneath my name to shelter—

My name for other purposes design'd,

Given from the fondness of a faithful heart,

With the best love o'erflowing——hast thou not

Beneath thy sovereign's name basely presum'd

To shield a lye ? a lye ! in publick utter'd,

To all deluded Sicily ? but know,

This poor contrivance is a weak as base.

In such a wretched toil none can be held

But fools and cowards——O thy flimsy arts,

Touch'd by my just my burning indignation,

Shall burst like threads in flame !——thy doating
prudence,

But more secures the purpose it would shake.

C

Had

Had my resolves been wavering and doubtful,
 This would confirm them, make them fix'd as fate;
 This adds the only motive that was wanting
 To urge them on thro' war and desolation—
 What! marry her! Constantia! her! the daughter
 Of the fell tyrant who destroy'd my father!
 The very thought is madness! ere thou seest
 The torch of Hymen light these hated nuptials,
 Thou shalt behold Sicilia wrapt in flames.
 Her cities raz'd her valleys drench'd with slaughter
 Love set aside—my pride assumes the quarrel.
 My honour now is up; in spite of thee,
 A world combin'd against me, I will give
 This scatter'd will in fragments to the winds,
 Assert my rights; the freedom of my heart,
 Crush all whodare oppose me to the dust,
 And heap perdition on thee.

Siff. Sir, 'tis just.

Exhaust on me your rage; I claim it all.
 But for these public threats thy passion utters,
 'Tis what thou canst not do!

Tanc. I cannot, ah!

Driven to the dreadful brink of such dishonour,
 Enough to make the tameſt coward brave,
 And into fierceneſs rouze the mildeſt nature,
 What ſhall arreſt my vengeance? who

Siff. Thyſelf.

Tanc. Away? dare not to juſtify thy crime?
 It's that alone can aggravate it's horror,
 Add inſolence to inſolence—perhaps
 May make my rage forget—

Siff. O let it burſt

On this grey head devoted to thy ſervice?
 But when the ſtorm has vented all it's fury,

Thou

Thou

Wilt h

And m

The w

Thyſel

Thou

A nobl

Superi

Compe

Unwar

But wh

With a

In calm

Theſe

And bo

The lo

Tanc.

Abus'd

Yes I

In thi

Shall l

When

But ha

Heaven

I were

Of a ſe

A ſoil

My ſa

At othe

Siff.

Whoſe

Thou then must hear—nay more, I know, thou wilt—

Wilt hear the calm, yet stronger voice of reason.
And must reflect that a whole people's safety,
The weal of trusted millions should bear down,
Thyself the judge, thy fondest partial pleasure.
Thou must reflect that there are other duties,
A nobler pride, a more exalted honour,
Superior pleasures far, that will oblige,
Compel thee, to abide by this my deed,
Unwarranted perhaps in common justice,
But which necessity, even virtue's tyrant,
With awful voice commanded—Yes, thou must,
In calmer hours, divest thee of thy love,
These common passions of the vulgar breast,
And boiling heat of youth, and be a king!
The lover of thy people!

Tanc. Truths ill-employ'd!
Abus'd to colour guilt!—a king! a king!
Yes I will be a king, but not a slave!
In this will be a king! in this my people
Shall learn to judge how I will guard their rights,
When they behold me vindicate my own.
But have I, say, been treated like a king?—
Heavens! could I stoop to such outrageous usage,
I were a mean a shameless wretch, unworthy
Of a scepter in a land of slaves,
A soil abhor'd of virtue, should belye
My father's blood, belye those very maxims,
At other times, you taught my youth—Siffredi!

[in a softened tone of voice.]

Siff. Behold, thy prince, behold my poor old servant,

Whose darling care, these twenty years, has been

C

To

To nurse thee up to virtue ; who for thee,
 Thy glory and thy weal, renounces all,
 All interest or ambition can pour forth ;
 What many a selfish father would pursue
 Thro' treachery and crimes : behold him here,
 Bent on his feeble knees, to beg, conjure thee,
 With tears to beg thee, to controul thy passion,
 And save thyself, thy honour, and thy people !
 Kneeling with me, behold the many thousands
 To thy protection trusted : fathers, mothers
 The sacred front of venerable age,
 The tender virgin and the helpless infant ;
 Ministers of heaven, those, who maintain,
 Around thy throne, the majesty of rule ;
 And those, whose labour, scorched by winds and sun,
 Feeds the rejoicing public : see them all,
 Here at thy feet, conjuring thee to save them,
 From misery and war, from crimes and rapine,
 Can there be aught, kind heaven ! in self-indulgence
 To weigh down these ? this aggregate of love,
 With which compar'd the dearest private passion
 Is but the wasted dust upon the ballance ?
 Nay turn not away—Oh is there not some part,
 In thy great heart, so sensible to kindness,
 And generous warmth, some nobler part to feel
 The prayers and tears of these, the mingled voice
 Of heaven and earth !

Tanc. There is ! and thou hast touch'd it.
 Rise, rise, Siffredi—Oh ! thou hast undone me,
 Unkind old man !—O ill-entreated Tancred !
 Which why so'er I turn, dishonour rears
 Her hideous front—and misery and ruin !
 Was it for this you took such care to form me ?
 For this imbued me with the quickest sense

Of

Of shame ; these finer feelings, that ne'er vex
The common mass of mortals, dully happy
In blest insensibility ? O rather
You should have fear'd my heart ; taught me that
power

And splendid interest lord it still o'er virtue ;
That, gilded by prosperity and pride,
There is no shame, no meanness ! temper'd thus,
I had been fit to rule a venal world.

Alas ! what meant thy wantonness of prudence ?

Why have you rais'd this miserable conflict

Betwixt the duties of the king and man ?

Set virtue against virtue ?——Ah Siffredi !

'Tis thy superfluous, thy unfeeling wisdom,
Has involv'd me in a maze of error,

Almost beyond retreat—But hold my soul,

Thy steady purpose—toft by various passions,

To this eternal anchor keep——there is,

Can be, no public without private virtue——

Then mark me well, observe what I command ;

It is the sole expedient now remaining——

To-morrow, when the senate meets again,

Unfold the whole, unravel the deceit ;

Nor that alone, try to repair it's mischief :

There all thy power, thy eloquence and interest,

Exert, to reinstate me in my rights,

And from thy own dark snares to disembroil me——

Start nor, my lord——this must and shall be done ?

Or here our friendship ends——Howe'er disguis'd,

Whatever thy pretence, thou art a traitor ?

Siff. I should indeed deserve the name of traitor,

And even a traitor's fate, had I so slightly,

From principles so weak, done what I did,

As e'er to disavow it——

38 *Tancred and Sigismunda.*

Tanc. Ha!

Siff. My Liege,
Expect not this,—tho' practis'd long in courts,
I have not so far learn'd their subtle trade,
To veer obedient with each guest of passion.
I honour thee, I venerate thy orders,
But honour more my duty. Nought on earth
Shall ever shake me from that solid rock,
Nor smiles nor frowns.—

Tanc. You will not then?

Siff. I cannot!

Tanc. Away? begone!—O my Rodolpho, come,
And save me from this traitor?—Hence, I say,
Avoid my presence strait; and, know, old man,
Thou my worst foe beneath the mask of friendship,
Who, not content to trample in the dust
My dearest rights, dost with cool insolence.
Persist, and call it duty; hadst thou not
A daughter that protects thee, thou shouldst feel
The vengeance thou deservest—No reply?
Away?

S C E N E IX.

Tancred, Rodolpho.

Rodol. What can incense my prince so highly
Against his friend Siffredi?

Tanc. Friend! Rodolpho?
When I have told thee what this friend has done,
How play'd me like a boy, a base-born wretch,
Who had nor heart nor spirit! thou wilt stand
Amaz'd, and wonder at my stupid patience.

Rodol. I heard, with mixt astonishment and grief,
The king's unjust dishonourable will,

Void

Void in itself—I saw you stung with rage,
And writhing in the snare ; just as I went,
At your command, to wait you here—but that
Was the king's deed, not his.

Tanc. O he advis'd it !

These many years he has in secret hatch'd
This black contrivance, glories in the scheme,
And proudly plumes him with his traitorous virtue.
But that was nought, Rodolpho, nothing, nothing !
O that was gentle, blameless to what follow'd !
I had, my friend, to Sigismunda given,
To hush her fears, in the full gush of fondness,
A blank sign'd by my hand—and he—O heavens !
Was ever such a wild attempt !—he wrote
Beneath my name an absolute compliance
Of this detested will ; nay, dar'd to read it
Before myself, on my insulted throne
His idle pageant plac'd—O words are weak
To paint the pangs, the rage, the indignation ?
That whirl'd from thought to thought my soul in
tempest,

Now on the point to burst, and now by shame
Repress'd—But in the face of Sicily,
All mad with acclamation, what Rodolpho,
What could I do ? the sole relief that rose
To my distracted mind, was to adjourn
Th' assembly till to-morrow—But to-morrow
What can be done ?—O it avails not what !
I care not what is done—My only care
Is how to clear my faith to Sigismunda.
She thinks me false ! she cast a look that kill'd me !
O I am base in Sigismunda's eye !
The lowest of mankind, the most perfidious !

Rodol. This was a strain of insolence indeed,

A

A daring outrage of so strange a nature,
As stuns me quite——

Tanc. Curs'd be my timid prudence !
That dash'd not back, that moment, in his face,
The bold presumptuous lye—and curs'd this hand !
That from a start of poor dissimulation,
Led off my Sigismunda's hated rival.
Ah then ! what, poison'd by the false appearance,
What, Sigismunda, were thy thoughts of me !
How, in the silent bitterness of soul,
How didst thou scorn me ! hate mankind, thyself,
For trusting to the vows of faithless Tancred !
For such I seem'd—I was !—the thought distacts
me !

I should have cast a flattering world aside,
Rush'd from my throne, before them all avow'd
her,

The choice, the glory of my free-born heart,
And spurn'd the shameful fetters thrown upon it—
Instead of that—confusion !——what I did
Has clinch'd the chain, confirm'd Siffredi's crime,
And fix'd me down to infamy !

Rodol. My lord,
Blame not the conduct, which your situation
Tore from your tortur'd heart—What could you
do ?

Had you so circumstanc'd, in open senate,
Before th' astonish'd public, with no friends
Prepar'd, no party form'd, affronted thus
The haughty princess and her powerful faction,
Supported by this Will, the sudden stroke,
Abrupt and premature, might have recoil'd
Upon your self, even your own friends revolted,
And turn'd at once the public scale against you.

Besides,

Besides.
In its f
You m
The t
As wea
And ho
His da
Howe?
Was fo
E'er to
Tanc
Could
Despit
Submi
Shall
What
I will
Of the
That
With
This
But
Are f
Be di
And c
I see
That
Big v
Whic
O let
My S
A pr
But a

Besides, consider, had you then detected
In its fresh guilt this action of Siffredi,
You must with signal vengeance have chastis'd
The treasonable deed—Nothing so mean
As weak insulted power that dares not punish.
And how would that have suited with your love ?
His daughter present too ? trust me, your conduct
Howe'er abhorrent to a heart like yours,
Was fortunate and wise—Not that I mean
E'er to advise submission—

Tanc. Heavens ! submission !
Could I descend to bear it, even in thought,
Despise me, you, the world, and Sigismunda !
Submission !—No ?—to-morrow's glorious light
Shall flash discovery on this scene of baseness.
Whatever be the risk, by heavens ? to-morrow,
I will o'erturn the dirty lye-built schemes
Of these old men, and shew my faithful senate,
That Manfred's son knows to assert and wear,
With undiminish'd dignity, that crown
This unexpected day has plac'd upon him.

But this, my friend, these stormy guests of pride
Are foreign to my love—till Sigismunda
Be disabus'd, my breast is tumult all,
And can obey no settled course of reason.
I see her still, I feel her powerful image,
That look, where with reproach complaint was
mix'd,

Big with soft woe and gentle indignation,
Which seem'd at once to pity and to scorn me—
O let me find her ? I too long have left
My Sigismunda to converse with tears,
A prey to thoughts that picture me a villain.
But ah ? how, clogg'd with this accursed state,

A tedious world, shall I now find access?
 Her father too—ten thousand horrors croud
 Into the wild fantastic eye of love—
 Whoknows what he may do? Come then, my friend
 And by thy sister's hand O let me steal
 A letter to her bosom—I no longer
 Can bear her absence, by the just contempt
 She now must brand me with, inflam'd to madness.
 Fly, my Rodolpho, fly? engage thy sister
 To aid my letter, and this very evening
 Secure an interview—I would not bear
 This rack another day, not for my kingdom?
 Till then deep-plung'd in solitude and shades,
 I will not see the hated face of man.

Thought drives on thought, on passions passions
 roll;

Her smiles alone can calm my raging soul.



ACT III. SCENE I.

Sigismunda alone, sitting in a disconsolate posture.

AH tyrant prince? ah more than faithless
 Tancred;
 Ungenerous and inhuman in thy falsehood?
 Hadst thou, this morning, when my hopeless heart,
 Submissive to my fortune and my duty,
 Had so much spirit left, as to be willing
 To give thee back thy vows, ah; hadst thou then
 Confess'd the sad necessity thy state
 Impos'd upon thee, and with gentle friendship,
 Since we must part at last, our parting soften'd;
 I should indeed—I should have been unhappy,

But

But no
 I had,
 A twee
 Thy i
 And n
 But co
 Thus
 And c
 In bla
 Posses
 To see
 Pangs

In bar
 How n
 That
 So wa
 Before
 Irrevo
 When
 Perhap
 Then,
 Thy l
 In eve
 And f
 But no
 Now t

With
 Nor w
 I wron
 As me
 What
 O'tis

But not to this extreâm—Amidst my grief,
I had, with pensive pleasure, cherish'd still
A sweet remembrance of thy former love,
Thy image still had dwelt upon my soul,
And made our guiltless woes not undelightful.
But coolly thus—How couldst thou be so cruel?—
Thus to revive my hopes, to soothe my love
And call forth all its tenderness, then sink me
In black despair—What unrelenting pride
Possess'd thy breast, that thou couldst bear unmov'd
To see me bent beneath a weight of shame?
Pangs thou canst never feel? How couldst thou
drag me,

In barbarous triumph at a rival's car?
How make me witness to a sight of horror?
That hand, which, but a few short hours ago,
So wantonly abus'd my simple faith,
Before th' attesting world given to another,
Irrevocably given!—there was a time,
When the least cloud that hung upon my brow,
Perhaps imagin'd only, touch'd thy pity.
Then, brighten'd often by the ready tear,
Thy looks were softness all; then the quick heart,
In every nerve alive, forgot it self,
And for each other then we felt alone.
But now, alas! those tender days are fled:
Now thou canst see me wretch'd, pierc'd with an-
guish,

With studied anguish of thy own creating,
Nor wet thy harden'd eye—Hold, let me think—
I wrong thee sure; thou canst not be so base,
As meanly in my misery to triumph—
What is it then? Why should I search for pain?—
O 'tis as bad!—'tis fickleness of nature,

'Tis

'Tis sickly love extinguish'd by ambition—
 Is there, kind heaven? no constancy in man?
 No steadfast truth, no generous fix'd affection,
 That can bear up against a selfish world?
 No, there is none—Even Tancred is inconstant!

[Rising.]

Hence! let me fly this scene!—Whate'er I see,
 These roofs, these walls, each object that surrounds me,

Are tainted with his vows—But whither fly?
 The groves are worse, the soft retreat of Belmont,
 Its deepening glooms, gay lawns, and airy summits,
 Will wound my busy memory to torture,
 And all its shades will whisper—faithless Tancred!
 My father comes—How, sunk in this disorder.
 Shall I sustain his presence?

SCENE II.

Siffredi, Sigismunda.

Siff. Sigismunda.

My dearest child! I grieve to find thee thus
 A prey to tears. I know the powerful cause
 From which they flow, and therefore can excuse
 them,

But not their wilful obstinate continuance.
 Come, rouse thee then, call up thy drooping spirit,
 Come, wake to reason from this dream of love,
 And shew the world thou art Siffredi's daughter.

Sigis. Alas! am unworthy of that name.

Siff. Thou art indeed to blame; thou hast too
 rashly

Engag'd thy heart: without a father's sanction,
 But this I can forgive. The king has virtues,
 That plead thy full excuse; nor was I void

Of

Of blame, to trust thee to those dangerous virtues.
Then dread not my reproaches. Tho' he blames,
Thy tender father pities more than blames thee.
Thou art my daughter still ; and, if thy heart
Will now resume its pride, assert itself,
And greatly rise superior to this trial,
I to my warmest confidence again
Will take thee, and esteem thee more my daughter.

Sigis. O you are gentler far than I deserve !
It is, it ever was, my darling pride,
To bend my soul to your supreme commands,
Your wisest will ; and tho', by love betray'd—
Alas ! and punish'd too—I have transgress'd
The nicest bounds of duty, yet I feel
A sentiment of tenderness, a source
Of filial nature springing in my breast,
That, should it kill me, shall controul this passion,
And make me all submission and obedience
To you my honour'd lord, the best of fathers.

Siff. Come to my arms, thou comfort of my age !
Thou only joy and hope of these grey hairs !
Come let me take thee to a parent's heart,
There with the kindly aid of my advice,
Even with the dew of these paternal tears,
Revive and nourish this becoming spirit—
Then thou dost promise me, my Sigismunda—
Thy father stoops to make it his request—
Thou wilt resign thy fond presumptuous hopes,
And henceforth never more indulge one thought
That in the light of love regards the king ?

Sigis. Hopes I have none !—those by this fatal
Are blasted all—But from my soul to banish, [day
While weeping memory there retains her seat,
Thoughts which the purest bosom might have che-
rish'd, Once

Once my delight, now even in anguish charming,
Is more, alas ! my lord, than I can promise.

Siff. Absence and time, the softner of our pas-
sions,

Will conquer this. Mean time, I hope from thee
A generous great effort ; that thou wilt now
Exert thy utmost force, nor languish thus
Beneath the vain extravagance of love.
Let not thy father blush to hear it said,
His daughter was so weak, e'er to admit
A thought so void of reason, that a king
Should to his rank, his honour and his glory,
The high important duties of a throne,
Even to his throne itself, madly prefer
A wild romantic passion, the fond child
Of youthful dreaming thought and vacant hours ;
That he should quit his heaven-appointed station,
Desert his awful charge, the care of all
The toiling millions which this isle contains ;
Nay more, should plunge them into war and ruin :
And all to sooth a sick imagination,
A miserable weakness—Must for thee.
To make thee blest, Sicilia be unhappy ?
The king himself, lost to the nobler sense
Of manly praise, become the piteous heroe
Of some soft tale, and rush on sure destruction ?
Canst thou, my daughter, let the monstrous thought
Possess one moment thy preverted fancy ?
Rouse thee, for shame ! and if a spark of virtue
Lies slumbering in thy soul, bid it blaze forth ;
Nor sink unequal to the glorious lesson,
This day thy lover gave thee from his throne.

Sigisf. Ah, that was not from virtue !—Had,
my father,

That

That b
Tis po
Then,
I had f
But in
Were t
Yet a f
Then r
The bl
Why d
Siff.
Sigisf.
I will de
For he
With th
A virgin
Tho' fro
To cast
t
Siff.
h
Tho'
Absolv'd
A rigoro
Subjects
This wo
Demand
The king
A chain
Tis fitti
To shew
as well a
a passion
ut, abo

That been his aim, I yield to what you say;
 'Tis powerful truth, unanswerable reason.
 Then, then, with sad but dutious resignation,
 I had submitted as became your daughter;
 But in that moment, when my humbled hopes
 Were to my duty reconcil'd, to raise them
 Yet a fonder height than e'er they knew,
 Then rudely dash them down—there is the sting!
 The blasting view is ever present to me—
 Why did you drag me to a fight so cruel?

Siff. It was a scene to fire thy emulation.

Sigisf. It was a scene of perfidy!—But know,
 I will do more than imitate the king—
 For he is false!—I, tho' sincerely pierc'd
 With the best truest passion ever touch'd
 A virgin's breast, here vow to heaven and you,
 Tho' from my heart I cannot, from my hopes
 To cast this prince—what would you more, my fa-
 ther?

Siff. Yes, one thing more—thy father then is
 happy—

Tho' by the voice of innocence and virtue
 Absolv'd, we live not to ourselves alone:
 A rigorous world, with peremptory sway,
 Subjects us all, and even the noblest most.
 This world from thee, my honour and thy own,
 Demands one step; a step, by which convinc'd
 The king may see thy heart disdains to wear
 A chain which his has greatly thrown aside.
 'Tis fitting too, thy sex's pride commands thee,
 To shew th' approving world thou canst resign,
 As well as he, nor with inferior spirit,
 A passion fatal to the publick weal.
 But, above all, thou must root out for ever

From

From the king's breast the least remain of hope,
And henceforth make his mention'd love dishonour.
These things my daughter, that must needs be done,
Can but this way be done——by the safe refuge,
The sacred shelter of a husband's arms.

And there is one——

Sigis. Good heavens ! what means my lord ?

Siff. One of illustrious family, high rank,
Yet still of higher dignity and merit,
Who can, and will protect thee ; one to awe
The king himself—Nay, hear me, Sigismunda——
The noble Osmond courts thee for his bride,
And has my plighted word——this day——

Sigismunda kneeling.

My father !

Let me with trembling arms embrace thy knees !
O if you ever wish'd to see me happy ;
If e'er in infant years I gave you joy,
When, as I prattling twin'd around your neck,
You snatch'd me to your bosom, kiss'd my eyes,
And melting said you saw my mother there ;
O save me from that worst severity
Of fate ! O outrage not my breaking heart
To that degree !——I cannot !——'tis impossible !
So soon withdraw it, give it to another——
Here me my dearest father ! here the voice
Of nature and humanity, that plead
As well as Justice for me !——Not to chuse
Without your wise direction may be duty ;
But still my choice is free——that is a right,
Which even the lowest slave can never lose.
And would you thus degrade me ? make me base ?
For such it were, to give my worthless person
Without my heart, an injury to Osmond,

The

The hi
Or I sh
Be to d
My ha
Far fro
At leas
Give m
All I c
Sheels
Siff.
The fo
Sigis
Till y
Siff.
Nothi
Of ho
Then
Resolv
As fui
And w
Sigi
Siff
From
O g
Which
Qu
Sigi
You c
Siff
Come
Comb
Cheri
S
Sig
O ev

The highest can be done——Let me, my lord——
Or I shall die, shall by the sudden change
Be to distraction shock'd——Let me wear out
My hapless days in solitude and silence,
Far from the Malice of a prying world !
At least—you cannot sure refuse me this——
Give me a little time——I will do all,
All I can do, to please you !——O your eye
Sheds a kind Beam——

Siff. My daughter ! you abuse
The softness of my nature——

Sigis. Here, my father,
Till you relent, here will I grow for ever !

Siff. Rise, Sigismunda, tho' you touch my heart,
Nothing can shake th' inexorable dictates
Of honour, duty, and determin'd reason.

Then by the holy ties of filial love,
Resolve, I charge thee, to receive Earl Osmond,
As suits the man who is thy father's choice,
And worthy of thy hand——I go to bring him——

Sigis. Spare me, my dearest father !

Siffredi, aside. I must rush
From her soft grasp, or nature will betray me ?
O grant us, heaven ! that fortitude of mind,
Which listens to our duty, not our passions——
Quit me, my child !

Sigis. You cannot, Oh my Father !
You cannot leave me thus !

Siff. Come hither. Laura.
Come to thy friend. Now shew thy self a friend.
Combate her weakness ; dissipate her tears ;
Cherish, and reconcile her to her duty.

S C E N E III. Sigismunda. Laura.

Sigis. O woe on woe ! distressed by love and duty !
O every way unhappy Sigismunda !

D

Laura.

Laura. Forgive me madam, if I blame your grief,
How can you waste your tears on one so false?
Unworthy of your tenderness? to whom
Nought but contempt is due and indignation?

Sigis. You know not half the horrors of my fate!
I might perhaps have learn'd to scorn his falsehood;
Nay, when the first sad burst of tears was past,
I might have rous'd my pride and scorn'd himself—
But 'tis too much, this greatest last misfortune—
O whither shall I fly? where hide me, Laura,
From the dire scene my father now prepares!

Laura. What thus alarms you, madam?

Sigis. Can it be?

Can I——ah no!——at once give to another
My violated heart? in one wild moment?
He brings Earl Osmond to receive my vows!
O dreadful change! for Tancred haughty Osmond!

Laura. Now, on my soul, 'tis what an outrag'd
heart,

Like thine should wish! should by heavens esteem it
Most exquisite revenge!

Sigis. Revenge on whom?

On my own heart, already but too wretched!

Laura. On him! this Tancred; who has basely sold
For the dull form of despicable grandeur,
His faith, his love!—At once a slave and tyrant!

Sigis. O rail at me, at my believing folly,
My vain ill-founded hopes, but spare him, Laura!

Laura. Who rais'd these hopes? who triumphs
o'er that weakness?

Pardon the word—You greatly merit him;
Better than him, with all his giddy pomp!
You rais'd him by your smiles when he was nothing!
Where is your woman's pride? that guardian spirit
Given us to dash the perfidy of man?

Ye

Ye powers ! I cannot bear the thought with patience
 Yet recent from the most unparing vows
 The tongue of love e'er lavish'd ; from your hopes
 So vainly, idly, cruelly deluded ;
 Before the publick thus, before your father,
 By an irrevocable solemn deed,
 With such inhuman scorn, to throw you from him !
 To give his faithless hand yet warm from thine,
 With complicated meannesses, to Constantia !
 And to compleat his crime, when thy weak limbs
 Could scarce support thee, then, of thee regardless,
 To lead her off ?

Sigis. That was indeed a fight
 To poison love ! to turn it into rage
 And keen contempt !——What means this stupid
 weakness

That hangs upon me ? hence unworthy tears !
 Disgrace my cheek no more ! No more, my heart,
 For one so coolly false or meanly fickle—
 O it imports not which—dare to suggest
 The least Excuse !—Yes, traitor, I will wring
 Thy gride, will turn thy triumph to confusion !
 I will not pine away my days for thee,
 Sighing to brooks and groves ; while, with vain pity
 You in a rival's arms lament my fate—
 No ! let me perish ! ere I tamely be
 That soft, that patient, gentle Sigismunda,
 Who can console her with the wretched boast,
 She was for thee unhappy !—If I am,
 I will be nobly so !——Sicilia's daughters
 Shall wondering see in me a great example
 Of one who punish'd her ill-judging heart,
 Who made it bow to what it most abhor'd !
 Crush'd it to misery ! for having thus
 So lightly listen'd to a worthless lover !

Laura. At last it mounts ! the kindling pride of virtue !

Trust me, thy marriage will embetter his——

Sigis. O may the furies light his nuptial torch !
Be it accurs'd as mine ? for the fair peace,
The tender joys of hymeneal love,
May jealousy awak'd, and fell remorse,
Pour all their fiercest venom thro' his breast !——
Where the fates lead, and blind revenge, I follow ?
Let me not think—By injur'd love ? I vow,
Thou shalt, base prince ; perfidious and inhuman ?
Thou shalt behold me in another's arms ?
In his thou hatest ? Osmond's !

Laura. That will grind

His heart with secret rage ? *aye, that will sting
His soul to madness ? set him up a terror,
A spectacle of woe to faithless lovers ?——
Your cooler thought, besides, will of the change
Approve, and think it happy. Noble Osmond
From the same stock with him derives his birth,
First of Sicilian barons, prudent, brave,
Of strictest honour, and by all rever'd——

Sigis. Talk not of Osmond but perfidious Tancred,
Rail at him, rail ? invent new names of scorn ?
Assist me, Laura ; lend my rage fresh fuel ;
Support my staggering purpose, which already
Begins to fail me——Ah, my vaunts how vain ?
How have I ly'd to my own heart——Alas ?
My tears return, the mighty flood o'erwhelms me ?
Ten thousand crouding images distract
My tortur'd thought——And is it come to this ?
Our hopes ? our vows ? our oft repeated wishes,
Breath'd from the fervent soul, and full of heaven,
To make each other happy ?——came to this ?

Laura. If thy own peace and honour cannot keep
Thy

Thy re
O thin
Thy fa
Sigis
That t
Each n
And ha
Can I
Thy te
With l
Nor a l
Repay
With f
It must
Sweet t
Yes, l
Be nob
Laura
The h
And h
Lau
Sif
Siff.
Behold
And w
Nor sh
To see
Osm
Madan
To ma
That f
And w
Consul
Yours

Thy resolution fix'd, yet, Sigismunda,
O think how deeply, how beyond retreat,
Thy father is engag'd.

Sigif. Ah wretched weakness?

That thus enthrals my soul, that chafes thence
Each nobler thought, the sense of every duty?
And have I then no tears for thee, my father?
Can I forget thy cares, from helpless years,
Thy tenderness for me? an eye still beam'd
With love? a brow that never knew a frown?
Nor a harsh word thy tongue? shall I for these,
Repay thy stooping venerable age,
With shame, anguish, disquiet, and dishonour?
It must not be?—thou first of angels? come,
Sweet filial piety? and firm my breast?
Yes, let one daughter to her fate submit,
Be nobly wretched—but her father happy?—
Laura? they come? O Heavens; I cannot stand
The horrid trial?—Open, open, earth?
And hide me from their view?

Laura. Madam?

SCENE IV.

Siffredi. Osmond. Sigismunda. Laura.

Siff. My daughter,

Behold my noble friend who courts thy hand,
And whom to call my son I shall be proud;
Nor shall I less be pleas'd, in his alliance,
To see thee happy.

Os. Think not, I presume,
Madam, on this your father's kind consent
To make me blest. I love you from a heart,
That seeks your good superior to my own;
And will by every art of tender friendship,
Consult your dearest welfare. May I hope,
Yours does not disavow your father's choice?

D 3

Sigif.

Sigif. I am a daughter, fir, and have no power
O'er my own heart—I die—support me, Laura.

(Faints.)

Siff. Help?—Bear her off---she breaths---my
daughter?—

Sigif. Oh?

Forgive my weakness—soft—my Laura, lead me—
To my apartment.

Siff. Pardon me, my lord,
If by this sudden accident alarm'd,
I leave you for a moment.

S C E N E V.

Osmond alone.

Let me think——

What can this mean?——is it to me aversion?
Or is it, as I fear'd, she loves another?
Ha! yes, perhaps the king, the young Count Tancred
They were bred up together——surely that,
That cannot be—Has he not given his hand,
In the most solemn manner to Constantia?
Does not his crown depend upon the deed?
No—if they lov'd, and this old statesman knew it,
He could not to a king prefer a subject.
His virtues I esteem—nay more, I trust them—
So far as virtue goes—but could he place
His daughter on the throne of Sicily——
O'tis a glorious bribe too much for man?——
What is it then?——I care not what it be.
My honour now, my dignity demands,
That my propos'd alliance, by her father
And even her self accepted, be not scorn'd.
I love her too——I never knew till now
To what a pitch I lov'd her. O she shot
Ten thousand charms into my inmost soul?
She look'd so mild, so amiably gentle,
She bow'd her head, she glow'd with such confusion,
Such

Such
In gra
The p
She m
Confer
Join'd
Upon
The
Not



A

T

The t
And a
But
O Ta
O gru
Some
Whe
Has L
Why
I will
La
Urg'd
But th
For su
Equal
I cou

Such loveliness of modesty ! she is,
In gracious mind, in manners, and in person,
The perfect model of all female beauty ?—
She must be mine—she is ?—if yet her heart
Consents not to my happiness, her duty,
Join'd to my tender cares, will gain so much
Upon her generous nature—That will follow.
The man of sense, who acts a prudent part,
Not flattering steals, but forms himself the heart.



ACT IV. SCENE I.

The Garden belonging to Siffredi's house.

Sigismunda, Laura.

Sigismunda, *with a letter in her hand.*

'TIS done !—I am a slave !—the fatal vow
Has pass'd my lips !—Methought in those
said moments,

The tombs around, the saints, the darken'd altar,
And all the trembling shrines with horror shook.

But here is still new matter of distress.

O Tancred cease to persecute me more !

O grudge me not some calmer state of woe !

Some quiet gloom to shade my hopeless days,

Where I may never hear of love and thee !

Has Laura too conspir'd against my peace ?

Why did you take this letter ?—bear it back—

I will not court new pain. [*Giving her the letter.*]

Laura. Madam, Rodolpho

Urg'd me so much, nay even with tears conjur'd me,

But this once more to serve th' unhappy king—

For such he said he was—that tho' enrag'd,

Equal with thee, at his inhuman falsehood,

I could not to my brother's fervant prayers

Refuse

Refuse this office—Read it—His excuses
Will only more expose his falsehood.

Sigif. No.

It suits not Osmond's wife to read one line
From that contagious hand—she knows too well !

Laura. He paints him out distress'd beyond ex-
pression,

Even on the point of madness. Wild as winds,
And fighting seas, he raves. His passions mix,
With ceaseless rage, all in each giddy moment.
He dies to see you and to clear his faith.

Sigif. Save me from that !—that would be worse
than all !

Laura. I but report my brothers words : who then
Began to talk of some dark imposition,
That had deceiv'd us all : when, interrupted,
We heard your father and earl Osmond near,
As summon'd to Constantia's court they went.

Sigif. Ha ! imposition ?—well !—if I am doom'd
To be, o'er all my sex, the wretch of love,
In vain I would resist—Give me the letter—
To know the worst is some relief—Alas !
It was not thus, with such dire palpitations.
That, Tancred, once I us'd to read thy letters.

[*Attempting to read the letter, but gives it to Laura.*
Ah fond remembrance blinds me—Read it, Laura.

Laura reads.

Deliver me, Sigismunda, from that most exquisite
misery which a faithful heart can suffer—To be
thought base by her, from whose esteem even vir-
tue borrows new charms. When I submitted to my
cruel situations it was not falsehood you beheld, but
an excess of love. Rather than endanger that, I for
a while gave up my honour. Every moment till I see
you stabs me with severer pangs than real guilt it-
self

self can
in the g
will ex
human
paper v
of love

Sigif.

That p
A thou
Gave i
A look
O blast
O pity
What
Reduc
Why v
Repair
A few
Iow'd
Thy lo
A bear
And ha
The pi
Ah the
Ah par
Ah cur
I was b

Laura

Or fals
I will v
To the
Your f

self can feel. Let me then conjure you to meet me in the garden, towards the close of the day, when I will explain this mystery. We have been most inhumanly abused; and that by the means of the very paper which I gave you, from the warmest sincerity of love, to assure to you the heart and hand of

Tancred.

Sigis. There, Laura, there, the dreadful secret sprung!

That paper! ha that paper! it suggests
A thousand horrid thoughts—I to my father
Gave it; and he perhaps—I dare not cast
A look that way—If yet indeed you love me,
O blast me not, kind Tancred, with the truth?
O pitying keep me ignorant for ever!
What strange peculiar misery is mine?
Reduc'd to wish the man I love were false!
Why was I hurry'd to a step so rash?
Repairless woe!—I might have waited, sure,
A few short hours—No duty that forbade—
I lov'd thy love that justice; till this day
Thy love an image of all perfect goodness?
A beam from heaven that glow'd with every virtue!
And have I thrown this prize of life away?
The piteous wreck of one distracted moment?
Ah the cold prudence of remorseless age!
Ah parents, traitors to your children's bliss?
Ah curs'd, ah blind revenge!—On every hand
I was betray'd—You, Laura, too, betray'd me!—

Laura. Who, who, but he, whate'er he writes,
betray'd you?

Or false or pusillanimous. For once,
I will with you suppose, that his agreement
To the king's will was forg'd—tho' forg'd by whom?
Your father scorns the crime—Yet what avails it?

This

This, if it clears his truth, condemns his spirit,
 A youthful king, by love and honour firm'd,
 Patient to sit on his insulted throne,
 And let an outrage, of so high a nature,
 Unpunish'd pass, uncheck'd, uncontradicted—
 O 'tis a meanness equal even to falshood !

Sigif. Laura, no more—We have already judg'd
 Too largely without knowledge. Oft, what seems
 A trifle, a meer nothing, by itself;
 In some nice situations, turns the scale
 Of fate, and rules the most important actions.
 Yes, I began to feel a sad presage :
 I am undone, from that eternal source
 Of human woes. The judgment of the passions.
 But what have I to do with these excuses ?
 O cease my treacherous heart to give them room ?
 It suits not thee to plead a lover's cause ;
 Even to lament my fate is now dishonour.
 Nought now remains, but with relentless purpose,
 To shun all interviews, all clearing up
 Of this dark scene ; to wrap myself in gloom,
 In solitude and shades ; there to devour
 The silent sorrows ever swelling here ;
 And since I must be wretched—for I must—
 To claim the mighty misery myself,
 Engross it all, and spare a hapless father.
 Hence let me fly !—the hour approaches—

Laura. Madam, behold he comes—the king—

Sigif. Heavens ! how escape ?

No—I will stay—This one last meeting—Leave me.

S C E N E II. Tancred. Sigismunda.

Tanc. And are these long hours of torture past ?
 My life ! my Sigismunda !

[*Throwing himself at her feet.*]

Sigif. Rise, my lord.

To

To see my sovereign thus no more becomes me.

Tanc. O let me kiss the ground on which you tread
Let me exhale my soul in softest transport?
Since I again embrace my Sigismunda? *Rising.*

Unkind! how couldst thou ever deem me false?
How thus dishonour love?—O I could much
Embitter my complaint!—How low were then
Thy thoughts of me? how didst thou then affront
The human heart itself? after the vows,
The fervant truth, the tender protestations,
Which mine has often pour'd, to let thy breast,
Whate'er th' appearance was, admit suspicion?

Sigisf. How! when I heard myself your full consent
To the late king's so just and prudent will?
Heard it before you read, in solemn senate?
When I beheld you give your royal hand,
To her, whose birth and dignity of right,
Demands that high alliance? yes, my lord,
You have done well. The man, whom heaven ap-
points

To govern others, should himself first learn
To bend his passion to the sway of reason.
In all you have done well; but when you bid
My humbled hopes look up to you again,
And sooth'd with wanton cruelty my weakness—
That too was well—My vanity deserv'd
The sharp rebuke, whose fond extravagance
Could ever dream to balance your repose,
Your glory and the welfare of a people.

Tanc. Chide on, chide on, thy soft reproaches now
Instead of wounding, only soothe my fondness.
No, no, thou charming consort of my soul?
I never lov'd thee with such faithful ardor,
As in that cruel miserable moment
You thought me false, when even my honour stoop'd
To

To wear for thee a baffled face of baseness.
 It was thy barbarous father, Sigismunda,
 Who caught me in the toil. He turn'd that paper,
 Meant for th' assuring bond of nuptial love,
 To ruin it for ever ; he, he wrote
 That forg'd consent, you heard beneath my name,
 Nay dar'd before my outrag'd throne to read it ?
 Had he not been thy father—Ha ? my love ?
 You tremble, you grow pale.

Sigif. Oh leave me, Tancred ?

Tanc. No?—leave thee ?—Never ? till you set
 My heart at peace, till these dear lips again
 Pronounce thee mine ? without thee I renounce
 Myself, my friends, the world—here on this hand--

Sigif. My lord, forget that hand, which never now
 Can be to thine united——

Tanc. Sigismunda ?

What dost thou mean ? thy words, thy look, thy
 manner,

Seem to conceal some horrid secret—heavens ?----
 No—that was wild--distraction fires the thoughts ?

Sigif. Enquire no more——I never can be thine.

Tanc. What, who shall interpose ? who dares at-
 tempt

To brave the fury of an injur'd king ?

Who, ere he sees thee ravish'd from his hopes

Will wrap all blazing Sicily in flames—

Sigif. In vain your power, my lord—This fatal
 error,

Join'd to my father's unrelenting will,

Has plac'd an everlasting bar betwixt us—

I am—earl Osmond's—Wife.

Tanc. Earl Osmond's wife !——

[*After a long pause, during which they look at one ano-
 ther with agitation and most tender distress.*

Heavens !

Tancred and Sigismunda. . 61

Heavens ! did I hear thee right ? what marry'd ?
marry'd !

Lost to thy faithful Tancred ! lost for ever !
Couldst thou then doom me to such matchless woe,
Without so much as hearing me ?—Distraction !—
Alas ! what hast thou done ? ah Sigismunda !—
Thy rash credulity has done a deed,
Which of two happiest lovers—that e'er felt
The blissful power, has made two finish'd wretches !
But—Madness !—sure, thou knowst it cannot be ?
This hand is mine ! a thousand thousand vows——

S C E N E III.

Tancred. Osmond. Sigismunda.

[Osmond, *snatching her Hand from the King.*

Madam, this hand, by the most solemn rites,
A little hour ago, was given to me,
And did not sovereign honour now command me,
Never but with my life to quit my claim,
I would renounce it—thus !

Tanc. Ha ? who art thou ? presumptuous man ?

Sigismunda, *aside.*

Where is my father ? heavens ? [*Goes out.*

Osmon. One thou shouldest better know——Yes—
view me—One ?

Who can and will maintain his rights and honour,
Against a faithless prince, an upstart king,
Whose first base deed is what a harden'd tyrant
Would blush to act.

Tanc. Insolent Osmond ? know,
This upstart king will hurl confusion on thee,
And all who shall invade his sacred rights,
Prior to thine—thine founded on compulsion.
On infamous deceit, while his proceed
From mutual love and free long-plighted faith.
She is, and shall be mine ?—I will annul,

By

By the high power with which the laws invest me,
 Those guilty forms in which you have entrap'd,
 Basely entrap'd, to thy detested nuptials,
 My queen betroth'd; who has my heart, my hand,
 And shall partake my throne—if, haughty lord,
 If this thou didst not know, then know it now:
 And know besides, that having told thee this,
 Shouldst thou but think to urge thy treason further
 Than treason more? treason against my love?—
 Thy life shall answer for it.

Os. Ha? my life?---

It moves my scorn to hear thy empty threats.
 When was it that a Norman baron's life
 Became so vile, as on the frown of kings
 To hang?---Of that thy lord the law must judge:
 Or if the law be weak, my guardian sword---

Tanc. Dare not to touch it, traitor? lest my rage
 Break loose, and do a deed that misbecomes me.

S C E N E IV.

Tancred. Siffredi. Osmond.

Siffredi entering.

My gracious lord? what is it I behold?
 My sovereign in contention with his subjects;
 Surely this house deserves from royal Tancred
 A little more regard, than to be made
 A scene of trouble and unseemly jars.
 It grieves my soul, it baffles every hope,
 It makes me sick of life, to see thy glory
 Thus blasted in the bud, heavens; can your highness
 From your exalted character descend,
 The dignity of virtue; and, instead
 Of being the protector of our rights,
 The holy guardian of domestic bliss,
 Unkindly thus disturb the sweet repose,
 The sanctimonious peace of families;

For

For which alone the freeborn race of men
To government submit.

Tanc. My Lord Siffredi,
Spare thy rebuke. The duties of my station
Are not to me unknown——But thou, old man,
Dost thou not blush to talk of rights invaded;
And of our best our dearest bliss disturb'd;
Thou; who with more than barbarous perfidy
Hast trampled all allegiance, justice, truth,
Humanity itself, beneath thy feet
Thou knowest thou hast---I could, to thy confusion
Return thy hard reproaches; but I spare thee
Before this lord, for whose ill-sorted friendship,
Thou hast most basely sacrific'd thy daughter.
Farewel, my Lord;——For thee, lord constable
Who dost presume to lift thy surly eye
To my soft love, my gentle Sigismunda,
Once again command thee, on thy life—
Yes—chew thy rage—but mark me---on thy life,
No further urge thy arrogant pretensions!

S C E N E V. Siffredi. Osmond.

Osmond. Ha! arrogant pretension! heaven and earth!

What? arrogant pretensions to my wife?

My wedded wife! were are we? in a land

Of civil rule, of liberty and laws?---

Not on my life pursue them?—Giddy prince?

My life disdains thy nod. It is the gift

Of parent heaven, who gave me too an arm,

Spirit to defend it against tyrants.

The Norman race, the sons of mighty Rollo,

Who rushing in a tempest from the north,

Great nurse of generous freemen? bravely won

With their own swords their seats, and still possess

them

the same noble tenure, and not us'd

To

For

To hear such language——if I now desist,
 Then brand me for a coward? deem me villain!
 A traitor to the publick? By this conduct
 Deceiv'd, betray'd, insulted, tyranniz'd.
 Mine is a common cause. My arm shall guard,
 Mix'd with my own, the rights of each Sicilian,
 Of social life, and of mankind in general.
 Ere to thy tyrant rage they fall a prey,
 I shall find means to shake thy tottering throne,
 Which this illegal this perfidious usage
 Forfeits at once, and crush thee in the ruins!—
 Constantia is my queen?

Siff. Lord Constable,

Let us be stedfast in the right; but let us
 Act with cool prudence, and with manly temper,
 As well as manly firmness. True, I own.
 Th' indignities you suffer are so high,
 As might even justify what now you threaten.
 But if, my lord, we can prevent the woes
 The cruel horrors of intestine war,
 Yet hold untouch'd our liberties and laws;
 O let us, rais'd above the turbid sphere
 Of little selfish passions, nobly do it?
 Nor to our hot intemperate pride pour out
 A dire libation of Sicilian blood.
 'Tis godlike magnanimity, to keep,
 When most provok'd, our reason calm and clear,
 And execute her will, from a strong sense
 Of what is right, without the vulgar aid
 Of heat and passion, which, tho' honest, bear us
 Often too far. Remember that my house
 Protects my daughter still; and ere I saw her
 Thus ravish'd from us, by the arm of power,
 This hand should act the Roman father's part.
 Fear not; be temperate; all will yet be well.
 I know the king. At first his passions burst
 Quick as the lightning's flash: but in his breast
 Honour and justice dwell,—trust me, to reason
 He will return.

Q/m.

Ofm. He will ? by heaven he shall !
 You know the King—I wish my Lord Siffredi,
 That you had deign'd to tell me all you knew—
 And would you have me wait with duteous patience,
 Till he return to reason ? ye just powers !
 When he has planted on our necks his foot,
 And trod us into slaves ; when his vain pride
 Is cloy'd with our submission ; if, at last,
 He finds his arm too weak, to shake the frame
 Of wide-establiſh'd order out of joint,
 And overturn all justice ; then, perchance,
 He, in a fit of sickly kind repentance,
 May make a merit to return to reason.

No, no, my lord ?—there is a nobler way
 To teach the blind oppressive Fury reason :
 Oft has the lustre of avenging steel
 Unseal'd her stupid eyes—the sword is reason ?

SCENE VI. Siffredi. Oimond. Rodolpho, *Guards.*

Rodol. My lord high constable of Sicily,
 In the king's name, and by his special order,
 I here arrest you prison of state.

Ofm. What king ? I know no king of Sicily,
 Unless he be the husband of Constantia.

Rodol. Then know him now behold his royal orders
 To bear you to the castle of Palermo.

Siff. Let the big torrent foam its madness off.
 Submit, my lord—No castle long can hold
 Our wrongs—this more than friendship or alliance
 Confirms me thine ; this binds me to thy fortunes,
 By the strong tie of common injury,
 Which nothing can dissolve—I grieve, Rodolpho,
 To see the reign, in such unhappy sort, begin.

Ofm. The reign ? the usurpation call it ?
 This Meteor king may blaze awhile, but soon
 Must spend his idle terrors—fir, lead on—
 Farewel, my lord—More than my life and fortune,
 Remember well, is in your hands—my honour ?

Siff. Our honour is the same. my son, farewel—

E

We

We shall not long be parted. On these eyes
Sleep shall not shed his balm, till I behold thee
Restor'd to freedom, or partake thy bonds.

Even noble courage is not void of blame,
Till nobler patience sanctifies its flame.



Act V. Scene I. Siffredi alone.

THE Prospect low'rs around. I found the king,
Tho' calm'd a little, with subsiding tempest,
As suits his generous nature, yet in love,
Abated nought, most ardent in his purpose;
Inexorably fix'd, whate'er the risque,
To claim my daughter, and dissolve this marriage—
I have embark'd, upon a perillous sea,
A mighty treasure. Here, the rapid youth
Th' impatient passions of a lover-king
Check my bold course: and there, the jealous pride
Th' impetuous honour of a haughty lord,
Of the first rank, in interest and dependants
Near equal to the king, forbid retreat.
My honour too, the same unchang'd conviction,
That these my measures were, and still remain
Of absolute necessity, to save
The land from civil fury, urge me on.
But how proceed?—I only faster rush
Upon the desperate evils I would shun.
Whate'er the motive be, deceit, I fear,
And harsh unnatural force are not the means
Of publick welfare or of private bliss—
Bear witness, Heaven? thou mind-inspecting eye!
My breast is pure. I have preferr'd my duty,
The good and safety of my fellow subjects
To all those views that fire the selfish race—
Of men, and mix them in eternal broils.

Enter an Officer belonging to Siffredi.

Offi. My lord, a man of nobler port his face
Wrap'd in disguise, is earnest for admission.

Siff. Go, bid him enter— [*Officer goes out.*]

Ha? wrap'd in disguise?

And at this late unseasonable hour? When

When o'er the world tremendous midnight reigns,
By the dire gloom of raging tempest doubled—

SCENE II. Siffredi, Osmond *discovering himself*.

Siff. What! ha! Earl Osmond, you?—welcome
once more,

To this glad roof?—But why in this disguise?
Would I could hope the king exceeds his promise!
I have his faith soon as to-morrow's sun
Shall gild Sicilia's cliffs, you shall be free—
Has some good angel turn'd his heart to justice?

Ofm. It is not by the favour of Count Tancred
That I am here. As much I scorn his favour,
As I defy his tyranny and threats—
Our friend Goffredo, who commands the castle,
On my parole, ere dawn, to render back
My person, has permitted me this freed
Know then; the faithless outrage of to day,
By him committed whom you call the king,
Has rous'd Constantia's court, our friends the friends
Of virtue justice, and of public faith,
Ripe for revolt, are in high ferment all.
This, this, they say, exceeds what'er deform'd
The miserable days we saw beneath
William the bad. This saps the solid base,
At once, of government and private life;
This shameless imposition on the faith,
The majesty of senates, this lewd insult,
This violation of the rights of men.
Added to these, his ignominious treatment
Of her th' illustrious offspring of our kings,
Sicilia's hope, and now our royal mistress.
You know, my lord, how grossly these infringe
The late king's will; which orders if Count Tancred
Make not Constantia partner of his throne,
He be quite excluded the succession,
And she to Henry given, king of the Romans,
The potent emperor Barbarossa's son,
Who seeks with earnest instance her alliance

I thence of you, as guardian of the laws,
As guardian of this will to you entrusted,
Desire, nay more, demand, your instant aid,
To see it put in vigorous execution.

Siff. You can't doubt my lord of my concurrence,
Who more than I have labour'd this great point?
'Tis my own plan. And, if I drop it now,
I should be justly branded with the shame
Of rash advice, or despicable weakness.
But let us not precipitate the matter.
Constantia's friends are numerous and strong;
Yet Tancred's, trust me, are of equal force.
E'er since the secret of his birth was known,
The people all are in a tumult hurl'd
Of boundless joy, to hear there lives a prince
Of mighty Guiscard's line. Numbers besides,
Of powerful barons, who at heart had pin'd,
To see the reign of their renown'd forefathers,
Won by immortal deeds of matchless valour,
Pass from the gallant Normans to the Suevi,
Will with a kind of rage, espouse his cause—
'Tis so my lord—he not by passion blinded —
'Tis surely so—O if our prating virtue
Dwells not in words alone—O let us join,
My generous Osmond, to avert these woes,
And yet sustain our tottering Norman kingdom?

Osmond. But how, Siffredi? how?—if by soft means
We can maintain our rights, and save our country,
May his unnatural blood first stain the sword,
Who with unpitying fury first shall bare it?

Siff. I have a thought, the glorious work be thine
But it requires an awful flight of virtue,
Above the passions of the vulgar breast,
And thence from thee I hope it noble Osmond—
Suppose my daughter, to her God devoted,
Were plac'd within some convent's sacred verge,
Beneath the dread protection of the altar—

Osmond. Ere then, by heavens I would devoutly shave
My

My holy scalp, turn whining monk myself,
And pray incessant for the tyrant's safety ?—
What ? how ? because an insolent invader,
A sacrilegious tyrant, in contempt
Of all those noblest rights, which to maintain
Is man's peculiar pride, demands my wife ;
That I shall thus betray the common cause
Of human kind, and tamely yield her up,
Even in the manner your purpote—O then
I were supremely vile ? degraded ? sham'd ?
The scorn of manhood ? and abhor'd of honour ?

Siff. There is, my lord, an honour, the calm child
Of reason, of humanity and mercy,
Superior far to this punctilious demon,
That singly minds itself, and embroils
With proud barbarian niceties the world ?

Ofm. My lord ? I cannot brook your prudence,
It holds a pulse unequal to my blood—
Unblemish'd honour is the flower of virtue ?
The vivifying soul ! and he who flights it
Will leave the other dull and lifeless dross,

Siff. No more—You are too warm

Ofm. You are too cool.

Siff. Too cool, my lord ? I were indeed too cool,
Not to resent this language, and to tell thee—
I wish earl Osmond were as cool as I
To his own selfish blis—ay, and as warm
To that of others—But of this no more—
My daughter is thy wife—I gave her to thee,
And will against all force maintain her thine.
But think not I will catch thy headlong passions,
Whirl'd in a blaze of madness o'er the land ;
Or, till the last extremity compel me,
Risque the dire means of war—theking to-morrow
Will set you free ; and, if by gentle means
He does not yield my daughter to thy arms,
And wed Constantia, as the will requires,
Why then expect me on the side of justice—
Let that suffice.

Osm. It does—Forgive my heat.

My rankled mind, by injuries inflam'd,
May be too prompt to take and give offence.

Siff 'Tis pass'd—Your wrongs, I own, may well
transport

The wisest mind; but henceforth, noble Osmond,
Do me more justice, honour more my truth.
Nor mark me with an eye of squint suspicion—
These jars apart—You may repose your soul
On my firm faith and unremitting friendship.
Of that I sure have given exalted proof,
And the next sun we see, shall prove it further—
Return my son, and from your friend Goffredo
Release your word. There try, by soft repose,
To calm your breast.

Osm. Bid the vext ocean sleep,
Swept by the pinions of the raging north—
But your frail age, by care and toil exhausted,
Demands the balm of all-repairing rest.

Siff. Soon as to-morrow dawn shall streak the skies
I, with my friends in solemn state assembled,
Will to the palace, and demand your freedom.
Then by calm reason, or by higher means.
The king shall quit his claim, and in the face
Of Sicily, my daughter shall be yours. Farewel.

Osm. My lord, good night.

SCENE 3. *Osmond alone.* I like him not
Yes—I have mighty matter of suspicion.
'Tis plain—I see it lurking in his breast,
He has a foolish fondness for this king—
My honour is not safe, while here my wife
Remains—Who knows but he this very night
May bear her to some convent as he mention'd—
The king too—tho' I smother'd up my rage,
I mark'd it well—will set me free to-morrow.
Why not to-night? he has some dark design—
By heavens! he has—I am abus'd most grossly;
Made the vile tool of this old statesman's schemes;

Marry'd

Marry
Who
And a
By ba
Witho
This
Keen,
Whic
The f
With
By m
I will
Perha
Has p
Shall
I will
Was
Th' i
But t
Driv
Rash
Are t
This
I ha
Hen
Shou
A bo
Wh
And
I wi
He'l
Wit
And
S
L
S
Of
Of

Marry'd to one—Ay, and he knew it—one
 Who loves Tancred ! hence her swooning, tears,
 And all her soft distress, when the disgrac'd me
 By basely giving her perfidious hand
 Without her heart—Hell and perdition ? this,
 This is the perfidy ?—this is the fell,
 Keen, envenom'd, exquisite disgrace ?
 Which to a man of honour even exceeds
 The falshood of the person—But I now
 With rouse me from the poor tame lathargy,
 By my believing fondness cast upon me.
 I will not wait his crawling timid motions,
 Perhaps to blind me meant, which he to-morrow
 Has promis'd to pursue. No ! ere his eyes
 Shall open on to-morrow's orient beam,
 I will convince him earl Osmond never
 Was form'd to be his dupe—I know full well
 Th' important weight and danger of the deed :
 But to a man, whom greater dangers press,
 Driven to the brink of infamy and horror,
 Rashness itself, and utter desperation,
 Are the best prudence—I will bear her off
 This night, and lodge her in a place of safety.
 I have trusty band that waits not far.
 Hence ? let me lose no time—One rapid moment
 Should ardent form, at once, and execute
 A bold design—'Tis fix'd—'Tis done !—Yes, then,
 When I have seiz'd the prize of love and honour,
 And with a friend secur'd her ; to the castle
 I will repair, and claim Goffredo's promise
 He'll rise with all his garrison—my friends
 With brave impatience wait, the mine is laid,
 And only wants my kindling touch to spring.

S C E N E IV. Sigismunda's Apartment.

Sigismunda. Laura.

Laura. Heavens ! 'tis a fearful night ?

Sigis. Ah ! the black rag :

Of midnight tempest, or th' assuring smiles

Of radiant morn are equal all to me.

Nought

Nought now has charms or terrors to my breast,
The feat of stupid woe!—Leave me my Laura.
Kind rest, perhaps, may hush my woes a little—
Oh for that quiet sleep that knows no morning!

Laura. Madam, indeed I know not how to go.
Indulge my fondness—Let me watch a while
By your sad bed, till these dread hours shall pass.

Sigif. Alas what is the toil of elements,
This idle perturbation of the sky,
To what I feel within—Oh that the fires
Of pitying heaven would point there fury here!
Good night, my dearest Laura!

Laura. Oh I know not
What this oppression means—but 'tis with pain,
With tears, I can presude myself to leave you—
Well then—Goodnight, my dearest Sigismunda!

SCENE V.

Sigif. And am I then alone?—The most undone,
Most wretched being, now beneath the cope
Of this affrighting gloom that wraps the world!—
I said I did not fear—Ah me! I feel

A shivering horror run thro' all my powers,
O I am nought but tumult, fears and weakness!
And yet how idle fear when hope is gone,
Gone, gone for ever!—O thou gentle scene

[*Looking towards her bed.*]

Of sweet repose, whereby th' oblivious draught
Of each sad toilsome day, to peace restor'd,
Unhappy mortals lose their woes awhile,
Thou hast no peace for me?—What shall I do?
How pass this dreadful night, so big with terror?—
Here, with the midnight shades, here will I sit,
A prey to dire despair, & ceaseless weep [*sitting down*]
The hours away—Bless me!—I heard a noise—

[*starting up.*]

No—I mistook—Nothing but silence reigns
And awful midnight round—Again!—O heaven!
My lord the king!

SCENE

SCENE VI. Tancred. Sigismunda.

Tanc. Be not allarm'd, my love ;

Sigif. My royal lord ! why at this midnight hour,
How came you hither ?

Tanc. By that secret way
My love contriv'd, when we, in happier days,
Us'd to devote these hours, so much in vain,
To vows of love and everlasting friendship.

Sigif. Why will you thus persist to add new stings
To her distress, who never can be thine ?

O fly me ! fly ! you know—

Tanc. I know too much.
O how I could reproach thee Sigismunda !
Pour out my injur'd soul in just complaints !
But now the time permits not, these swift moments,
I told thee how thy father's artifice
Forc'd me to seem perfidious in thy eyes.
Ah, fatal blindness ! not to have observ'd
The mingled pangs of rage and love that shook me ;
When, by my cruel public situation
Compell'd, I only feign'd consent to gain
A little time, and more secure thee mine.
E'er since—A dreadful interval of care ! —
My thoughts have been employ'd, not without hope
How to defeat Siffredi's barbarous purpose.
But thy credulity has ruin'd all,
Thy rash, thy wild—I know not what to name it—
Oh it was prov'd the giddy hopes of man
To be delusion all, and sickening folly !

Sigif. Ah, generous Tancred ! ah thy truth de-
stroy me !

Yes, yes, 'tis I, 'tis I alone am false !
My hasty rage, join'd to my tame submission,
More than the most exalted filial duty
Could e'er demand, has dash'd our cup of fate
With bitterness unequal'd—But, alas !
What are thy woes to mine ?—to mine, just heaven !
Now is thy turn of vengeance--hate, renounce me !
O leave me to the fate I well deserve, To

To sink in hopeless misery !—at least,
Try to forget the worthless Sigismunda !

Tanc. Forget thee ! No ! thou art my soul itself !
I have no thought, no hope, no wish but thee !
Even this repented injury, the fears,
That rouse me all to madness, at the thought
Of losing thee, the whole collected pains
Of my full heart, serve but to make thee dearer !
Ah, how forget thee !—Much must be forgot,
Ere Tancred can forget his Sigismunda !

Sigif. But you, my lord must make that great

Tanc. Can Sigismunda make it ? effort.

Sigif. Ah ! I know not

With what success—But all that feeble woman
And love-entangled reason can perform.

I, to the utmost, will exert to do it.

Tanc. Fear not—'tis done !—if thou canst form
the thought,

Success is sure—I am forgot already !

Sigif. Ah Tancred ! my lord, respect me more.
Think who I am—What can you now propose ?

Tanc. To claim the vows which heaven has heard
And vindicate the rights of holy love
By faith and honour bound, to which compar'd
These empty forms, which have ensnar'd thy hand,
Are impious guile, abuse, and profanation—
Nay, as a king, whose high prerogative
By this unlicens'd marriage is affronted,
To bid the laws themselves pronounce it void.

Sigif. Honour my lord, is much too proud to catch
At every slender twig of nice distinctions.
These for th' unfeeling vulgar may do well :
But those, whose souls are by the nicer rule
Of virtuous delicacy noble sway'd,
Stand at another bar than that of laws.
Cease to urge me---since I am not born
To that exalted fate to be your queen—
Or, yet a dearer name—to be your wife ?——
I am the wife of an illustrious lord

Of

Of your own princely blood ; and what I am,
I will with proper dignity remain.
Retire my royal lord—There is no means
To cure the wounds this fatal day has given.
We meet no more !

Tanc. Oh barbarous Sigismunda ?
And canst thou talk thus steadily ? thus treat me
With such unpitying, unrelenting rigour ?
Poor is the love, that rather than give up
A little pride, a little formal pride,
The breath of vanity ? can bear to see
The man, whose heart was once so dear to thine
By many a tender vow so mix'd together,
A prey to anguish, fury and distraction !---
Canst not surely make me such a Wretch
Thou canst not, Sigismunda !---yet relent,
O save us yet !---Rodolpho, with my guards,
Waits in the garden---Let us seize the moments
We ne'er may have again---With more than power
I will assert thee mine, with fairest honour.
The world shall even approve ; each honest bosom
Swells with a kindred joy to see us happy.

Sigisf. The world !—What is the world to me ?
The conscious mind is its own awful world.—
And yet, perhaps, if thou wert not a king,
I know not, Tancred, what I might have done.
Then, then, my conduct, sanctify'd by love,
Could not be deem'd, by the severest judge,
The mean effect of interest, or ambition.
But now not all my partial heart can plead,
I shall ever shake th' unalterable dictates
That tyrannize my breast.

Tanc. 'Tis well—No more---
Yield me to my fate—Yes, yes inhuman !
Once thy barbarian heart is steel'd by pride,
But up to love and pity, here behold me
Lying on the ground, a vile and abject wretch !
Exposed to all cares, all dignities, all duties !

Here

76 *Tancred and Sigismunda.*

Here will I grow, breathe out my faithful soul,
Here at thy feet--death, death alone shall part us!

Sigis. Have you then vow'd to drive me to perdition?

What can I more?—Yes, Tancred! once again

I will forget the dignity my station

Commands me to sustain--for the last time

Will tell thee, that, I fear, no ties, no duty,

Can ever root thee from my hapless bosom.

O leave me! fly me! were it but in pity?---

To see what once we tenderly have lov'd,

Cut off from every hope---cut off for ever?

Is pain thy generosity should spare me.

Then rise my lord; and if you truly love me;

If you respect my honour, nay, my peace,

Retire! for tho' th' emotions of my heart

Can ne'er alarm my virtue; yet, alas!

They tear it so, they pierce it with such anguish

Oh 'tis too much! I cannot bear the conflict!

SCENE VII. Tancred, Osmond, Sigismunda.

Osmond, entering.

Turn, tyrant? turn? and answer to my honour,
For this thy base insufferable outrage!

Tanc. Insolent traitor! think not to escape
Thyself my vengeance! *(They fight. Osmond falls.)*

Sigis. Help here? Help!--O heavens!

[Throwing herself down by him.]

Alas! my lord, what meant your headlong rage?

That faith, which I, this day, upon the altar

To you devoted, is unblemish'd, pure,

As vestal truth; was resolutely yours,

Beyond the power of aught on earth to shake it.

Osmon. Perfidious woman? die?---

*[Shortening his sword, he plunges it into her breast
and to the grave]*

Attend a husband, yet but half aveng'd?

Tanc. O horror? horror? execrable villain?

Osmon. And, tyrant! thou?--thou shalt not o'er
my tomb

Exu

Tancred and Sigismunda.

77

Exult 'tis great 'tis great ?—I die content.—[Dies.

S C E N E 8.

Tancred, Siffredi, Rodolpho, Sigismunda, Laura.

Tanc. (*Throwing himself down by Sigismunda.*

Quick ? here ? bring aid ?—All in Palermo bring
Whose skill can save her ?—Ah ? that gentle bosom
Pours fast the streams of life.

Sigif. All aid is vain,
I feel the powerful hand of death upon me—
But, oh ? it sheds a sweetness thro' my fate,
That I am thine again ; and without blame,
May in my Tancred's arms resign my soul ?

Tanc. Oh, death is in that voice ! so gently mild,
So sadly sweet, as mixes even with mine
The tears of hovering angels ?—Mine again !—
And is it thus the cruel fates have join'd us ?
Are these the horrid nuptials they prepare
For love like ours ? is virtue thus rewarded ?
Let not my impious rage accuse just heaven ?
Tancred ? thou hast murder'd Sigismunda ?
That furious man was but the tool of fate,
I, I the cause ?—But I will do thee justice
On this deaf heart ? that to thy tender wisdom
Refus'd an ear—yes, death shall soon unite us !

Sigif. Live, my Tancred ? Let my death suffice
To expiate all that may have been amiss.
May it appease the fates, avert their fury
From thy propitious reign ? mean time, of me
And of thy glory mindful, live, I charge thee ?
Guard our friends, and make thy people happy
[*Observing Siffredi fix'd in astonishment and grief.*
My father ?—oh ? how shall I lift my eyes
To thee my sinking father ?

Siff. Awful heaven ?
I am chastis'd ?—My dearest child ?—

Sigif. Where am I ?
A fearful darkness closes all around—
My friends ? We needs must part—I must obey
Th' imperious call—Farewel, my Laura cherish
My poor afflicted father's age—Rodolpho, Now

Now is the time to watch th' unhappy king,
 With all the care and tenderness of friendship--
 Oh my dear father ? bow'd beneath the weight
 Of age and grief--the victim even of virtue,
 Receive my last adieu ?--Where art thou--
 Give me thy hand--But ah ?--it cannot save me
 From the dire king of terrors, whose cold power
 Creeps o'er my heart--oh ?

Tanc. How these pangs distract me ;
 O lift thy gracious eyes ?---thou leav'st me then ?
 Leav'st me, my Sigismunda ?

Sigi. Yet a moment--
 I had, my Tancred, something more to say---
 Yes---but thy love and tenderness for me
 Sure makes it needless--harbour no resentment
 Against my father ; venerate his zeal,
 That acted from a principle of goodness,
 From a faithful love to thee--Live, and maintain
 My innocence imbalm'd, with holiest care
 Preserve my spotless memory ?---I die---
 Eternal Mercy take my trembling soul ?
 Oh ? 'tis the only sting of death to part
 From those we love ? farewell, my Tancred. (*Dies.*)

Tanc. Thus then ? *Flying to his sword is held.*

Rodol. Hold ! hold ! my lord ! Have you forgot
 Your Sigismunda's last request already,

Tanc. Off ! set me free ? think not to bind me down,
 With barbarous friendship, to the rack of life !
 What hand can shut the thousand thousand gates.
 Which death still opens to the woes of mortals ?---
 I shall find means--No power in earth or heaven
 Can force me to endure the hateful light,
 Thus robb'd of all that lent it joy and sweetness !
 Off ! traitors ! off ! or my distracted soul
 Will burst indignant from this jail of nature !
 To where she beckons yonder--No, mild seraph !
 Point not to life--I cannot linger here,
 Cut off from thee, the miserable pity,
 The scorn of human kind !-- A trampled king !
 Who let his mean poor-hearted love, one moment,

To coward prudence stoop ; who made it not
The first undoubting action of his reign,
To snatch thee to his throne, and there to shield thee,
Thy helpless bosom from a ruffian's fury !---

O shame ! O agony ! O the fell stings
Of late, of vain repentance !——Ha ! my brain
Is all on fire ? a wild abyss of thought ?——

Th' infernal world discloses ? see ? behold him ?
Lo ? with fierce smiles he shakes the bloody steel,
And mocks my feeble tears ?—hence quickly hence
Spurn his vile carcass ? give it to the dogs ?
Expose it to the winds and screaming ravens ?

Or hurl it down that fiery steep to hell,
There with his soul to toss in flames for ever ?——

Ah, impotence of rage ?—What am I ?—Where ?
Sad, silent, all ?—The forms of dumb despair.

Around some mournful tomb ?---What do I see ?
This soft abode of innocence and love

Turn'd to the house of death ? a place of horror ?--

Ah ! that poor corse ? pale ? deformed with murder ?
Is that my Sigismunda. [*Throwing himself down by her*

Siffredi, After a pathetic pause,

Have I liv'd to these years, by heaven reserv'd,

To be a dreadful monument of justice ?---

Rodolpho, raise the king, and bear him hence
From this distracting scene of blood and death.

Alas ! I dare not give him my assistance ;
My care would only more enflame his rage.

Behold the fatal work of my dark hand,
That by rude force the passions would command,
That ruthless sought to root them from the breast ;
They may be rul'd, but will not be oppress'd.

Taught hence, ye parents, who from nature stray,
And the great ties of social life betray ;

Ne'er with your children act a tyrant's part :

'Tis yours to guide, not violate the heart.

Ye vainly wise, who o'er mankind preside,
Behold my righteous woes, and drop your pride ?

Keep virtue's simple path before your eyes,

For think from evil good can ever rise.

E P I L O G U E.

CRamm'd to the throat with wholesome moral stuff.
 Alas ! poor audience ! you have had enough.
 Was ever hapless heroine of a play ?
 In such a piteous plight as ours to-day ?
 Was ever woman so by love betray'd ?
 Match'd with two husbands, and yet—die a maid.
 But bless me !—hold---What sounds are these I hear !---
 I see the Tragic Muse herself appear.

Here the tragic Muse enters slowly and speaks the following lines ;

Hence with your slipshod Epilogue, that tries
 To wipe the virtuous tear from British eyes ;
 That dares my moral Tragic scone profane,
 With strains—at best, unsuiring, light and vain.
 Hence from the pure unsully'd beams that play
 In yon fair eyes, where virtue shines---away !
 Britons, to you from chaste Castalian groves,
 Where dwell the tender, oft unhappy loves ;
 Where shades of heroes roam, each mighty name,
 And court my aid to rise again to fame ;
 To you I come, to freedom's noblest seat,
 And in Britannia fix my last retreat.

In Greece, and Rome, I watch'd the publick weal !
 The purple tyrant trembled at my steel:
 Nor did I less o'er private sorrows reign,
 And mend the melting heart with softer pain.
 On France and you then rose my brightning star.
 With social ray---the Arts are ne'er at war.
 O as your fire and the genius stronger blaze,
 As yours are generous freedom's bolder lays,
 Let not the Gallick taste leave yours behind,
 In desert manners and in life resign'd :
 Banish the motley mode, to tag low verse,
 The laughing ballad to the mournful herse.
 When thro' five acts your hearts have learnt to glow,
 Touch'd with the sacred force of honest woe ;
 O keep the dear impression on your breast,
 Nor idly lose it for a wretched jest !

F I N I S.



E.
ur.

!...

aks the

1!